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Julius Evola : tradition, reaction, and the Radical Right

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1. *Biographical information*

POSSIBLY the most important intellectual figure for the Radical Right in contemporary Europe, Julius Evola (1898-1974), began his career in the 1910s as a Dada painter and poet. His position during Fascism has given rise to ambivalent evaluations, partly spurred by Evola's own disingenuous claim to have been neither fascist nor anti-fascist. Indeed, he never bothered to join the party as a card-holding member; moreover, his lofty, aristocratic demeanor did not make him popular with the regime's bureaucrats, nor could his imperial paganism be very well accepted at a time in which Fascism was signing a concordat that made of the Catholic Church a pillar of the regime. Evola's interest in occultism and oriental disciplines did not do much to improve matters; hence he was kept on the sidelines of official party politics, as some sort of heretic or at least eccentric. Nevertheless, for over ten years he was in charge of the cultural page of an influential paper (Farinacci's *Il regime Fascista*) which he titled *Diorama filosofico*. *Spiritual problems in Fascist ethics* and used as an outlet for the publication of traditionalist thinkers (among others, K. A. Rohan, O. Spann, A. E. Günther, and especially René Guénon, [*Cinabro*, 104-105]. Moreover, towards the end of the regime, he had access to Mussolini, to the point of being among those who welcomed him in Rostenburg (Hitler's headquarters) after the Duce's escape from Italy in 1943 [*Cinabro*, 161, *Fascismo*, 51].

But the world with which Evola really identified was that of the German *konservative Revolution* [Faye, Klemperer, Mohler, Rauschnig, Sontheimer] from whose authors and thinkers he drew a large part of his inspiration, and with whose intellectual and political standpoints he was in full agreement [*Fascismo*, 151-54; *Cinabro*, 130]. For him, the climax of a 1934 visit to Germany was a speech he delivered at Berlin's *Herrenklub*, the circle of the conservative aristocracy: 'Here—he was later to recount in his autobiography—I found my natural habitat. From then on a cordial and fruitful friendship was established between myself and the club's president, Baron Heinrich von Gleichen [...]. That was also the basis for certain activity in Germany, grounded on common interests and objectives' (1) [*Cinabro*, 137].

(1) Heinrich von Gleichen-Russwurm was the formal head of the *Juniklub*, the very center of the *Jungkonservativen*, in turn one of the most important strains of the *konservative Revolution* [Mohler, 138]. The towering intellectual figure of the club, and its spiritual leader, was Artur Moeller van den Bruck, whose immensely influential

Third Reich (1923), one of the sacred texts of the whole movement, was dedicated, with a long, overwrought letter, to Gleichen. 'The movement [... had] one heart, Moeller van den Bruck, and two organizational heads [...]: Stadler [...]; Gleichen, who [set] the links with the world of business and the "establishment", and found the appropriate

Evola was wounded by a Russian bomb in Vienna, in 1944, and remained crippled thereafter. Returning to Italy in 1948, he once again refused to join any political party: yet in the fifties, one of the 'currents' within M S I (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*, the official neo-Fascist party) was identified as "*spiritualista-evoliana*" [Salierno, 34] and after Evola's death, the M S I's leader, G. Almirante, was to hail him as 'our Marcuse (only better)' [Galli, 20] (2). However, Evola's relationships with M S I were not easy (3), and his undisputed domain was that of youth groups, circles, journals, cenacles: for generation upon generation of Radical Right militants he was *the* sage and guru, extending his influence outside of Italy. Although several of his works had been translated into German before the war (4), only after the conflict did he become a cult figure in radical groups. In France, practically all of his work has been available for the last fifteen years (5); a 'Centre d'Études doctrinales Evola' operated in Paris

organizational form in the *Deutsche Herrenklub*, founded in 1924' [Mohler, 404]. What Mohler characteristically omits mentioning is that the transformation of the *Juniklub* into the wealthier and more worldly *Herrenklub* caused a dramatic fracture between Moeller and his former associates, including Gleichen, 'whose capacity for political accommodation was very much greater than Moeller's [...] The burden proved too great; Moeller's mind and nerves gave way, and in 1924 he suffered a nervous breakdown. A few months later he committed suicide' [Stern, 262-263; on Moeller see also Goel-del].

(2) The present deputy-secretary of M S I, P. Rauti, one-time leader of the 'spiritualist' trend within M S I, then (in 1956) founder of possibly the most important extra-parliamentary group of the Radical Right, *Ordine Nuovo*, protagonist of an untold number of accidents within the 'strategy of tension' [Ferraresi (c)], considers Evola 'the greatest traditionalist thinker in our days in the entire West' [Rauti, 65]. Rauti's book, be it noted incidentally, in many parts is nothing but a blatant plagiarization of Evola's works, and a bad one at that. See examples in Sheehan, 50, fn. 9].

(3) 'Your leaders are imbeciles—is a typical remark thrown by Evola to a group of M S I youth who reverently journeyed to hear the oracle—violence is the only possible reasonable solution, but it requires intelligence, and the latter is conspicuously lacking' [Salierno, 142-143].

(4) E.g., *Heidnischer Imperialismus* (Leipzig, Armanen Verlag, 1933); *Erhebung wider die moderne Welt* (Stuttgart, Deutsche Ver-

lags-Anstalt, 1935); *Die arische Lehre von Kampf und Sieg* (Wien, Scholl Verlag, 1940); *Grundriße des faschistischen Rassenlehre* (Berlin, Runge-Verlag, 1942). After the war, and up to 1977, the following have appeared: *Das Geheimnis des Graals* (Munich, O.W. Barth-Verlag, 1955); *Metaphysik des Sexus* (Stuttgart, E. Klett-Verlag, 1961).

(5) French translations include: *La doctrine de l'éveil. Essai sur l'ascèse bouddhique* (Paris, Adyar, 1956) (2nd revised & augm. edit., Milan, Archè, 1976); *Métaphysique du sexe* (Paris, Payot, 1959, 1969, 1976); *Chevaucher le tigre* (Paris, La Colombe, 1964; Trédaniel, 1982; *La tradition hermétique* (Paris, Chacornac, 1968; Éditions traditionnelles, 1972, 1975); *Le mystère du Graal et l'idée impériale gibeline* (Éditions traditionnelles, 1967, 1972, 1974); *Le yoga tantrique. Sa métaphysique, ses pratiques* (Paris, Fayard 1971, 1980); *Les hommes au milieu des ruines* (Paris, Les Sept Couleurs, 1972); *Masques et visages du spiritualisme contemporain* (Montréal-Bruxelles, Éditions de l'Homme, 1972); *Révolte contre le monde moderne* (Éditions de l'Homme, 1973); *Julius Evola, le visionnaire foudroyé* (a collective work, including some texts by Evola and others by disciples and admirers) (Paris, Copernic, 1977); *La doctrine aryenne de lutte et de victoire* (Paris, Cercle culture et liberté, 1979); *Orientations* (Carmagnola, ed. Ark-tos, 1980); *Métaphysique de la guerre* (Milan, Archè, 1980); *Symboles et 'mythes' de la tradition occidentale* (Archè, 1980); *Le fascisme vu de droite, with Notes sur le Troisième Reich* (Paris, Éd. Totalité, 1981); *Le chemin de Cinabre* (Archè, 1982); *L'arc et la massue* (Trédaniel, 1983).

in the middle 1970s; a journal, *Totalité*, styles itself *Revue évolienne de France*, etc. All this while, official culture, by and large, has ignored him.

A full assessment of Evola's voluminous writings and influence in fields ranging from politics *stricto sensu*, to esoterism, to traditionalistic thinking, etc., is yet to be carried out. [See, however, Ferraresi (b), (d); di Vona; Jellamo; Sheehan]. In this paper attention will be focussed mostly on the political aspects of his 'doctrine'.

2. Intellectual background

Evola's doctrine can be considered as one of the most radical, consistent, rigorous expressions of anti-equalitarian, anti-liberal, anti-democratic and anti-popular thought in the twentieth century. Its derivation from the great store of nineteenth-century conservative and reactionary thought provoked by the French Revolution [Manneheim (a)] is quite obvious, and so is its affinity with the twentieth-century version [Marcuse, Bobbio (a)] of such thought. Hence, it will be useful to place it by locating the schools and strains of thought that have most influenced the author and the specific way in which they are worked together in his doctrine: Evola may not be a very original thinker (the point is quite a controversial one) (6), but he is not a mere repeater.

An extreme form of *Idealism* is most prominent in Evola's early writings [*Idealismo Magico; Individuo Assoluto*], but the effects last throughout, especially in the attempt to construe a model of man striving to reach a level of absolute self-determination [Sheehan, 53; Jellamo, 217 ff.]. Within this realm, the influence of *oriental doctrines*, notably Zen Buddhism, Tantrism, Taoism, Hinduism, and a discipline like Yoga (on which he wrote extensively before they became fashionable in Italy) [*Tantra; Yoga; Risveglio*], is also prominent, especially in *idées-forces* as those of detachment ('way of detachment'), impassibility, action-without-acting, rejection of the outside world, quest for inner transcendence, and the like [e.g., *Cinabro*, 31, 68-69].

The importance of the *conservative Revolution*, as already mentioned, is overwhelming in Evola's thought. It is especially influential in the

By far less numerous are the translations in English: *The Doctrine of the Awakening* (London, Luzac & Co., 1951); *The Metaphysics of Sex* (New York, Inner Traditions International, 1983).

(6) Even among non-partisan scholars, opinions on Evola's intellectual worth differ dramatically. Sheehan considers him 'perhaps the most original and creative—and intellectually the most nonconformist—of the Italian Fascist philosophers' [Sheehan, 76]. Jesi, on the contrary, credits him with having been, at best, a clever 'travelling

salesman' of northern wares, whose cultural prestige in Italy (what there was of it) is to be understood only as an effect of his provincial readers' ignorance of the German sources which he plundered [Jesi (b), 100].

In the present paper interest is focused on the political effects of Evola's doctrines on Radical Right groups, in other words, on Evola as an ideologue: within this perspective, the question of his originality need not be primary.

notion of nihilism, the confrontation of man with a world of ruins, where values have crumbled and conventional morals are no longer compelling. Here, of course, reference to the grand inspirer of the *conservative Revolution*, F. Nietzsche, is *de rigueur*: the rejection of historical rationality, of the linear conception of time, of bourgeois optimism, of the notion of progress, etc., are all expressed in terms that closely recall those of the German philosopher, from whom, however, Evola differs on many counts, as will be presently shown.

The *rejection of modernity*, almost a commonplace in conservative thought, is pushed by Evola to its most radical extreme, leading him to a full glorification of the *world of tradition*: here the most important influence is that of René Guénon, 'this peerless master of our epoch' [*Cinabro*, 90 *Ricognizioni*, 205 ff.]. In the same area, a critical role is played by the writings of J.J. Bachofen, discovered, again, via the intermediation of the *conservative Revolution*, which, in the 1920s, had given origin to a veritable *Bachofen-Renaissance* [Gossman (b), 139-140] (7).

From Bachofen Evola takes not only the anthropological and mythical lexicon, plus the morphology of traditional societies (8), but also some

(7) In the 1920s and 1930s interest for Bachofen was revived, in a distinctly fascist direction, by M. Schröter and especially A. Bäumler, one of the *conservative Revolution's* 'führenden Köpfe' [Mohler, 479], who wrote a 300-page long introductory essay to his and Schröter's selection of Bachofen's works [Gossman (a), 5-7; 1984, 138-140], possibly the text through which Evola came to know Bachofen [*Cinabro*, 93]. The political relevance of this 'renaissance' is demonstrated by the official role of Bäumler who, between 1933 and 1945 and with the full support of A. Rosenberg, was the director of the *Institut für politische Pädagogik* of Berlin's University. [On the use of Bachofen's works by right-wing members of the *Bachofen-Renaissance* see also Jesi (1973), 69-75, where W. Benjamin's 'defense' of Bachofen from the left is discussed as well. On Bachofen's influence on left-wing thinkers, like E. Fromm and L. Mumford, see Gossman (b), 139; his influence on the classics of Marxism, and especially Engels, is well-known (Campbell, lii-liii).]

At the time, the *éclat* of the *Bachofen-Renaissance* was such as to elicit the attention of such diverse observers as B. Croce [1928] and T. Mann. The latter, reviewing the phenomenon in his *Pariser Rechenschaft* (1926) sees 'Bachofen and Nietzsche as representative of the two directions between which modern man, faced with the failure

of nineteenth-century liberalism, must choose: that of regression into the dark world of myth and the Unconscious (Bachofen) and that of progress, heroic transcendence of old fears and idols, and courageous assumption of freedom (Nietzsche)' [Gossman 1984, 139-140]. Of course Nietzsche, at least in his early works, (*Birth of Tragedy*) was heavily influenced by his Basle friend: one of his best known constructs, the Dionysian/Apollonian opposition, is taken over from Bachofen. Even when differences later occurred, elements of similarity between the two authors remained in the role assigned to myth and in general in the awareness of the power of non-scientific, non-rational insights which mould cultures and transmit to their members their deepest feelings [Boas, xx-xxii]. The fact that Evola was profoundly influenced by both authors is, of course, not without significance from our viewpoint.

(8) It is especially to Bachofen that Jesi refers when he accuses Evola of plagiarizing German sources [Jesi (b), 94-95]. In this connection, it should be mentioned that Evola edited and translated a selection of Bachofen's works: J.J. BACHOFEN, *Le madri e la virilità olimpica. Studi sulla storia segreta dell'antico mondo mediterraneo*, with the Introduction by J. Evola (Milano, Bocca, 1949).

major methodological and epistemological criteria, such as the reliance on myths, sagas and symbols as dependable sources for the comprehension of the ancient world. Bachofen's position, in turn, should not be seen as an eccentric or isolated reaction against dominant scientific (positivistic) historiography. In the German world, opposition to the Niebuhrian paradigm ('critique of sources'), 'was more widespread than people think' partly as a way of remaining faithful to the humanist philology of the 1820s and 1830s [Gossman (b), 161]. Hegel himself, in a famous statement, had claimed that there is more truth in the narratives of the ancient historians than in all the arbitrary constructions of modern philologists [*ibid.*]. Unquestionably, in this respect, Evola is in the mainstream of romantic thought [see *below*, pp. 114 ff.].

3. *Tradition and the two natures*

At the basis of Evola's traditionalist thought lies the 'doctrine of the two natures', separating the metaphysical from the physical, the immortal from the mortal world, the (superior) region of being from the (inferior) region of becoming, the dominating, *virile* principle of form (spirit) from the lower *feminine* domain of matter [*Rivolta*, 19 ff.; Sheehan, 55; Jellamo, 224 ff.] (9). In this system of dichotomies the world of tradition clearly belongs to the first set, being defined ('in the sense suggested by René Guénon') as an organic civilization, where all activities are uniformly oriented 'from above and towards the above', that is, towards something superior to what is merely human and naturalistic, and where a set of unchangeable metaphysical principles are dominant. 'This whole can be called "tradition" in the singular mode, since values and principles are basically the same throughout, notwithstanding obvious variations in historical forms' [*Orientamenti*, 30; also, *Rovine*, 20; *Cavalcare*, 10] (10).

The sets of dichotomies are structured in a vertical mode; that is, they correspond to a *hierarchical* conception. The latter, in turn, is what structures traditional society, whose typical form of organization is the *caste system*, best exemplified in its Hindu form [*Rivolta*, 120 ff.]. The caste system replicates *analogically* (analogy being Evola's favourite instru-

(9) Other polarities (Evola is nothing if not a binary thinker) include: virile-olympian *vs.* feminine-telluric types of spirituality; civilizations of Heroes *vs.* civilizations of Mothers; solar forces, principles, cults, etc., *vs.* chthonian and lunar ones; aristocratic ethic based on the principle of difference, *vs.* tribal promiscuity and the abolition of social differences; hierarchical social organization *vs.* 'primitive communism' and its later incarnations; and so on. The

derivation of most of these couples of opposites from Bachofen is visible and acknowledged. [See, e.g., *Rivolta*, 168, esp. 261 ff., *Razza*, 33, 152-171; *Saggi*, 27-39].

(10) 'Wherever there is tradition in the true and deep sense of the word, there is necessarily agreement on the principles [...] In virtue of the principles being universal all traditional doctrines are identical in essence' [Guénon (a), 214, 216; also: (b), 30; (c), 39].

ment of argumentation) (11) the hierarchy of functions 'comprised in any organism ruled by the spirit', where at the bottom lie the still undifferentiated forces of matter and mere vitality, over which, however, metabolism and organic economy exercise a regulatory function. These, in turn, are ruled by will, over which the soul reigns, 'as sovereign power and light of the whole organism'. Thus the castes: at the bottom the servants or workers (*Śúdra*), then the "bourgeoisie" (*Vaiśya*), then the warriors' aristocracy (*Kṣatriya*), and above all the others the representatives of spiritual power, the *Brāhman*. In another sense the caste system mirrors a hierarchical principle: birth in a caste was a consequence of the individual's transcendental nature, hence derived from a form of superior judgment which justified terrestrial hierarchies, implementing a supreme form of the anti-equalitarian principle *suum cuique* [*Rivolta*, 122-123]. As against this unequal society, where, however, everybody had equal dignity, 'the servant [...] as much as the king [...] [the main rule being] for everyone *to be oneself*' [*Rivolta*, 129], stands the chaos of present-day society, utterly bereft of any superior order and justification, where the *soi-disant* 'free man' is nothing but 'the casteless, the slave emancipated, the glorified pariah' [*Rivolta*, 389].

Closely linked with the doctrine of caste is another central theme in Evola's thought, the conception of historical times as times of *regression*. Here a critical difference between the modern and the traditional way of thinking must be observed. While the modern optimistically extolls historical development as (positive) evolution and progress, 'the truth known to traditional man' claims just the opposite, that is, an 'experience' of regress and involution, 'a fall from exalted superior stages to stages ever more conditioned by the mortal, contingent human element' [*Rivolta*, 221]. The 'experience' of decline is evident in the myth of the Four Ages (gold, silver, bronze, iron), which the West knows in its Graeco-Roman version (Hesiod-Aennius) but which appears in much the same

(11) In fact, much more than a simple mode of argumentation, analogy is part of a crucial ontological dimension which structures Evola's universe as the *principle of correspondence*. The latter organizes relationships among several levels of reality 'by ensuring an essential functional correlation among *analogous* elements, which are presented as homologous forms of the appearance of a central, unitary significance' [*Rivolta*, 14, italics added].

As for its logical status, it may be remembered that analogy was one of the antagonists of the modern process of rationalization [see *below*, p. 115], which emerged in opposition, among others, to the philosophy of nature of the Renaissance, 'because of its magical elements and its tendency to think

in terms of analogies' [Mannheim (a), 85]. It was only fitting then that the romantic reaction to bourgeois rationalization brought back to favour analogic forms of thinking [*idem*, 132 ff.]. Some of the most cherished *topoi* of reactionary thought are indeed shaped in analogic form, as, e.g., the *Land-schaftseele* doctrine, whose essential element is 'the linking of the human soul with its natural surroundings, with the "essence" of nature [...] Thus the Jews, being a desert people, are viewed as a shallow, arid, "dry" people, devoid of profundity and totally lacking in creativity [...] The Germans [...] living in the dark mist-shrouded forests, are deep, mysterious, profound' [Mosse (a), 4-5].

form in most traditional cycles (Iranian, Chaldean), and especially in the Hindu teaching of the four *Yuga* (*Satya* or *Kṛta*, *Treta*, *Dvāpara*, *Kali*) of which the last, *Kali Yuga*, or 'age of darkness', precedes the cataclysmic dissolution that in turn will lead back to the Golden Age: this is the time in which contemporary civilization lives (12). The notion of an exalted origin, of a 'more-than-human' beginning flies in the face of evolutionism: those who believe in a lower (animalesque) origin, and in the later uninterrupted progress of mankind, can consider it only as 'mythology' in the derogatory sense. They are left, however, with the burden of explaining the origins of this 'mythology', given its absolute prevalence in traditional accounts, where, on the contrary, no mention ever appears of a lower origin of mankind [*Rivolta*, 223] (13). The methodological issues involved in this standpoint will be taken up shortly.

The cycle of decline is mirrored (once again, by way of *analogy* [*Rivolta*, 397 ft. 1]) in the law of the *regression of castes*. The Golden Age was ruled by the first caste, the representatives of sacred and spiritual authority: 'the memory of a society [thus] ruled [...] goes back to almost mythical distances. The ensuing reign of the second caste [the warriors' aristocracy, expressed by temporal kings] ends with the decline of the great monarchies. It is then the time of the Third State, of the bourgeoisie, of industrialism, capitalism. Finally, what corresponds to the fourth caste emerges, and struggles for world power: marxism and communism' [*Ricognizioni*, 208; *Rivolta*, 397 ff.]. From a different perspective, the involution of the world can be seen as caused by the gradual decline of the order of Fathers, which was based on hierarchy and differentiation, on the rule of form over matter, of self-sacrifice and communal values, and is replaced by the order of Mothers, where levelling, equalitarianism and promiscuity prevail, matter rules over form, and the values thereto linked (universalism, utilitarianism, hedonism) are dominant [Baillet (b), xxiii] (14).

This set of doctrines is important in Evola's system not only for its substantive contents, but also for the gnoseological criteria it embodies. Indeed, the fundamental difference between the two worlds, the modern one and that of tradition, is expressed both by the categories that regulate, and the means of knowledge that can be applied to each. Thus, the

(12) The concept of *Kali Yuga* is prominent in Guénon's writings. See, e.g., *Crise*, 15 ff.; *Roi du Monde*, 67 ff.; also Merz, 41; Chacornac, 82; Serant, 42.

(13) This, incidentally, appears to me as a quest for that kind of empirical verification of ancient materials which should be anathema to Evola's gnoseology [see below].

(14) Bachofen's legacy is quite obvious in the elements of this second scheme. It should be noted that the process is conceived of by Evola as moving in the

opposite direction of the one that Marx and especially Engels [*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*] envisioned, on the basis of the same materials, as reinterpreted by L. Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877) [Campbell, lii]. In Engels the evolution goes from promiscuity to matriarchy to patriarchy, and shall be ended by socialism, which will re-establish equality among sexes, and the 'primitive communism' of the origins [Baillet, 1982 xxiii].

ontological distinction between being and becoming corresponds to the opposition between *cyclical* and *linear time*. Rejecting any quantitative, linear notion of an irreversible process, Evola sees time as forever scanned in cycles, each of which is in itself perfect and concluded. Nietzsche's influence is obvious; but while in Nietzsche a spheric dimension prevails (15), implying not only *ewige Wiederkehr*, eternal recurrence of the same, but also lack of pre-ordering instances, infinite possibilities of direction for a subject powerful enough to carry out his will; for Evola the cycle indicates a process in itself perfect and concluded, susceptible of returning only within its specific moments [*Rivolta*, 183; *Jellamo*, 223; *Revelli*, 182] (16). A consequence of this organic (not quantitative) completeness is the fragmentation of historical duration, whereby time is represented as a 'movable series of eternities', where mobility is redeemed from the shackles of becoming, and finds its ultimate anchor in being [*Jellamo*, 223].

Closely connected with the dichotomy just discussed, and also based on the distinction between being and becoming, is another important one, that which sets *civilization of space* apart from *civilization of time* [*Rivolta*, 182 ff.]. Traditional societies belong to the first, being rooted in an a-temporal dimension, in the infinity and indeterminacy of space, forever the same. Here, no quantitative measure of time is applicable, but only a representation by way of images and symbols, where numbers themselves indicate not so much quantities as rhythms. Symbols then perform the ordering function that elsewhere pertains to numbers, thus acquiring a *real significance* over and above the fantastic one attributed to them by modern mentality [*Jellamo*, 223]; the same applies to *myths*.

Here we come to the gnoseological aspects, for the interpretation of this *reality* is precluded to empirical, positivistic inquiries:

We are mostly concerned with an order of things where 'historically' and 'scientifically' valid materials have the least value, whereas what is considered as myth, saga, legend, and therefore is denied historical relevance, exactly because of such features acquires a superior validity [...] [*Rivolta*, 12].

Much as the major principles and institutions of the world of tradition—true State, *Imperium*, *Auctoritas*, hierarchy, functional subdivision of classes (castes), and the like [*Rovine*, 21]—are located over and above

(15) As in Zarathustra's famed aphorism: 'Alles geht, alles kommt zurück; ewig rollt das Rad des Seins [...] In jedem Nu beginnt das Sein; um jedes Hier rollt sich die Kugel dort. Die Mitte ist überall' (The English version hardly catches the rhythm of the original: 'Everything goeth, everything returneth. For ever rolleth the wheel of existence [...] At every moment existence beginneth. Round every Here rolleth the ball There. The midst is everywhere' [Nietzsche, 316].)

(16) This, it should be noted, is one of the grounds where the French *Nouvelle Droite* [see below] differentiates itself from Evola. According to the N.D.'s official philosophy of history, *nominalism* [Benoist (b), 31 ff.], 'man is free to assert his will as an act of power, instant by instant, in a discontinuous historical time, in a dimension of absolute liberty totally free from any historical conditioning' [Revelli, 182; see also Sheehan, 65].

historical development, in the same way the knowledge of such truths requires apposite faculties, lying much beyond the capabilities of the chief historical-empirical approach, namely, *reason*. The point is a crucial one.

The process of rationalization that accompanies the emergence of modern society (Max Weber's *Entzauberung*) implies the attempt to establish a form of knowledge that can be socialized, i.e., expressed in a universally valid and demonstrable manner. The effort is made 'to exclude from knowledge everything that is bound up with particular personalities and that can be proved only to narrow social groups with common experiences, and to confine oneself to statements that are generally communicable and demonstrable' [Mannheim (a), 85-86].

The rejection of this type of thought need not necessarily lead to irrationalism. The conservative-romantic reaction, for one, acquires several forms, not all of which can be considered as straightforwardly irrationalistic. For example, against the shackles of 'static' rationalistic discourse, 'dynamic thinking' advocates a form of thought whose purpose is not to depict the world, but to *accompany* its movements [Mannheim (a), 132]. Antitheses like those between 'idea' and 'concept', between 'concept' and 'image', long enduring in conservative discourse (17), are rooted in this notion. From here it is but a short step to the several strains of *Philosophy of Life*, which put forward, in opposition to mere reason, entities like 'history', 'life', 'the spirit' [Mannheim (a), 148]. In the most extreme form of such philosophies, 'life' as such is seen as an *Urgegebenheit*, a 'primal given', 'beyond which the mind cannot penetrate, which is withdrawn from any rational foundation, justification or evaluation'. The notion of life becomes then 'an inexhaustible reservoir for all irrational powers': dark, vital forces (*Blut und Boden*), primeval instincts of race and *Volk*, great, unchainable creative impulses, and the like [Marcuse, 5; Bobbio (a), 603]. Claiming their justification through mere existence,

(17) Indeed the *Nouvelle Droite's* claim to give precedence to *image* over *concept* [Benoist (b), 34] is in a place of remarkable continuity with, for example, Adam Müller's opposition of *concept* and *idea* ('Such stiff forms, designed once for all for the State, for life and for man, as the ordinary sciences carry and hawk around, are called *concepts*. But there is no concept of the State [...] If the thought which we have entertained of such a sublime object expands; if it moves and grows, as the object moves and grows; then we call the thought, not the concept of the thing, but the *Idea* of the thing, of the State, of life') [quoted in Mannheim (a), 152], and the *konservative Revolution's Literatur des Unliterarischen* [Mohler, 18 ff.], as f.e. in Gerhard Nebel's

opposition between *concept* and *image* 'the concept is unproductive, as it can only order what is already at hand, discovered, available, while the image begets spiritual reality, and wrenches from the being moments hitherto sealed. Cautiously does the concept draw distinctions and classifications within existing findings, while, adventurous and unconcerned, forth sails the image in uncharted expanses. Concepts live from fear, images from the triumphant glory of discovery [...] The concept as concept excludes mystery, the image is a paradoxical unity of opposites, as at the same time it brings light, and honours the dark [...] (and so on for another page) [quoted in Mohler, 19-20].

these elements stand opposed to what requires rational justification: 'that which is beneath reason elevates itself, by means of its function "beyond good and evil", to what is beyond reason"' [Marcuse, 6] (18).

The fundamentally irrationalistic nature of these positions is not denied even by those who hold them. In other cases, however, the claim is made to reject modern rationality in the name of a superior form, a sort of 'super-rationality' [Mannheim (a), 147], as when 'the spirit', 'the intellect', or other (assertedly) supra-rational faculties are extolled. This is clearly the case with Evola:

The truths that allow us to understand the world of Tradition are not those that can be 'learned' or 'discussed'. They either are or are not. They can only be *remembered*, and that is possible only if one is set free from the shackles represented by various human constructions (chief among these the results and methods of authorized 'researches'), and when one has awakened the capacity to *see* from the non-human viewpoint, which is the same as the Traditional viewpoint [*Rivolta*, 13, italics original] (19).

(18) 'This philosophy of life—Marcuse hastens to clarify—resembles Dilthey's *Lebensphilosophie* in name only, and took from Nietzsche only odds and ends and pathos. Its social functions come to light most clearly in the works of Spengler [specifically, *Years of Decision*], where they become the substructure of an imperialistic economic theory' [Marcuse, 5].

(19) This is where Evola's gnoseological position comes closest to Bachofen's. The latter is best understood in terms of its critique of positivistic historiography, represented by Mommsen, who, to Bachofen's eyes, incarnated all that is negative in Prussian scholarship: assembly-line organization of research, pedantic *Schulmeisteri*, and especially forced imposition of modern politico-economic categories to ancient materials. ('The only moving force of ancient life, it seems, is trade and traffic'; quoted in Gossman (a), 27). For Bachofen, on the contrary, the historian was to put himself in a position of almost religious reverence towards the vestiges of the past, trying to recreate the proper spirit *via* a sort of empathetic immersion, made possible by a method different from 'the slower, more arduous road of rational combination' i.e., by the imagination, 'traversed with the force and swiftness of electricity. Aroused by direct contact with the ancient remains, the imagination [*Phantasie*] grasps the truth at one stroke, without intermediary links. The knowledge acquired in this second way is infinitely more living and colorful than the products of the understanding

[*Verstand*]' [Bachofen 11]. As for the organization and communication of scholarship, against Mommsen's *Grosswissenschaft* seen as a complement to *Grossstaat* and *Grossindustrie* [Gossman (b), 173], Bachofen's partiality was for the small, the esoteric, for intimate communication among a tiny group united by elective affinities. 'Mommsen's *History* offers itself democratically to be read by all; Bachofen's texts remain mysterious, ambiguous, requiring for their interpretation the same hermeneutic skills and insight that their author himself used to decipher the texts of antiquity, and addressing themselves, like the Orphic mysteries [...] to an elect of initiates' [Gossman (a), 24].

Compare Bachofen's position to Evola's: 'The application of modern "historical" and "scientific" methods to traditional civilizations [...] in most cases turns out to be nothing but an act of violence, which destroys, constrains, deforms the real spirit, and imposes the straightjacket of interpretive alibis grounded in the prejudices of modern mentality, whose sole concern is to assert and defend itself under all circumstances' [*Rivolta*, 11-12]. Evola's determination to address only a very limited number of exceptional persons also strikes a familiar note in this context, while another deeply held belief of Bachofen's is brought to the most radical, extreme consequences, especially in Evola's later works [see below p. 113]: that of self-cultivation as an existential duty, when practical activity and effective action in the world have become

The 'memory' and 'capacity to see' advocated here are precisely such supra-rational faculties ('non-human' stands for 'more-than-human'), which some commentators assimilate to a kind of Platonic *anamnesis*, an 'intellectual intuition' of the eternal, non-human realm of the spirit [Sheehan, 53]. Their enemy is 'discursive thought', which 'decentralizes' man, detaching him from the origins, i.e., from pure being. In the history of Western philosophy, Socrates bears the responsibility for 'the most fatal deviation'. 'the substitution of discursive thought for the spirit'. The result has been 'the emancipation of the individual as "thinker" from Tradition, and the affirmation of reason as the instrument of free criticism and profane knowledge', a reprehensible, regressive development for Evola [*Rivolta*, 319-320; Sheehan, 53-54], who elsewhere defines rationalization as 'a whim' (*fisima*) [*Fascismo*, 29]. It follows that the transmission of the truths reached by the 'non-human viewpoint' cannot be entrusted to 'democratic' means, open to discussion and inquiry: 'Il est très difficile de faire comprendre à nos contemporains qu'il y a des choses qui, par leur nature même, ne peuvent se discuter' [Guénon (b), 80] (20).

In sum: the rejection of becoming in favour of the eternal being implies the rejection of linear in favour of cyclical time and space. This in turn implies the rejection of history (21) and of the form of knowledge most appropriate for historical inquiry, i.e., rational, discursive thought. *Myth* triumphs over *history* and, even more, over *logos* (22)—a fundament of reactionary thought, especially, but not only, widespread in the German world that so profoundly influenced Evola (23). This is also a major

impossible (a time-honoured German attitude: Bruford) [Gossman (b), 16].

All these and other similarities, however, should not hide the basic differences that separate the two authors' outlook and *Weltanschauung*. In particular, Bachofen's 'profound longing for human communion, the hatred of violence and exclusion, and the radical distrust of power and domination' [Gossman (a), 83] are totally ignored in Evola's harsh, aristocratic, warriors' world where the use of force (even if within the framework of traditional rules) is taken for granted as a mechanism regulating the rapport between superior and inferior human beings.

(20) Not the least paradox in this area, according to Jesi's witty observation, is that 'most of the sages of modern esoterism [...] have spent their life proclaiming that their wisdom was inaccessible and incommunicable by words, while at the same time being the most prolific of polygraphs' [Jesi (b), 6].

(21) 'Nature is interpreted as a dimension of mythical originality (well characterized

in the phrase "blood and soil"), present in all things as a prehistorical dimension. Human history truly begins only when this dimension is overcome by being transformed' [Marcuse, 5-6].

(22) The opposition between *mythos* and *logos* dates back to Greek philosophy and, understandably, has given origin to an immense bibliography. For a synthetic account see Jesi (a), 12-27; 112.

(23) 'We [German] intellectuals—complains Herman Hesse's *Steppenwolf*—instead of [...] rendering obedience to the spirit, the Logos, the Word, and gaining a hearing for it, are all dreaming of a speech without words that utters the inexpressive and gives form to the formless [...] The German intellectual has constantly rebelled against the word and against reason, and courted music' [Hesse, 148-149]. A similar point is made by Thomas Mann, in one of the *Magic Mountain's* great ideological confrontations. Here Herr Settembrini, the spokesman for enlightened, humanistic reason, sadly remarks to his disciple, Hans Castorp: 'You are silent [...] you and your

symbol of the 'interruption of discourse' which some authors see as the origin of the *Weltanschauung* of violence [Ferrarotti, Sheehan].

4. *The Empire. Rome and Prussia*

According to Evola, not everything in historical times is to be entirely discarded. Admittedly, the examples of political regimes that, in such times, have attempted to salvage, however incompletely, traditional patterns are very few indeed. Among them (predictably), are Sparta, and the archaic Rome of the *patres*, both belonging to:

a heroic-sacral world, where a severe ethos prevailed, together with love for discipline, a virile bearing, an austere, commanding soul—a world which was hardly carried on in the following, so-called 'classical' period, from which, in its turn, 'latinity' and the 'union of the peoples of latin civilization' supposedly have derived [Rovine, 224] (24).

'Latin', for Evola, is a term of abuse, synonymous with individualism, lack of discipline and precision, cunning, rejection of higher values like honour and loyalty—what elsewhere has been called 'mandolin ethic' [Ferraresi (b), 21]. From this viewpoint, the modern style which most closely resembles the ancient is the Prussian—hence the repeated assertion of an ideal con-

country you preserve [...] silence. You do not love the Word [...] My friend, that is dangerous. Speech is civilization itself. The word, even the most contradictory word, preserves contact—it is silence which isolates. The suspicion lies at hand that you will seek to break your solitude with deeds' [Mann, 517-518; translation partially altered].

To Hesse's 'speech without words' correspond Spengler's 'wordless ideas', but the message is far grimmer (to say nothing of the literary level): 'That which we have in our blood by inheritance—namely, wordless ideas—is the only thing which gives permanence to our future' [Spengler, xiii].

Lest the above be considered as belonging only to German culture, it should be remembered that even a man like Luigi Pirandello, when signing the *manifesto* of Fascist intellectuals, felt obliged to declare: 'I have always fought against words' [quoted in Hamilton, 57]. And in front of Thomas Mann's worry that silence may be broken by 'deeds' (where Goethian suggestions are clearly discernible: *im Anfang war die Tat*) it should be remembered that fanatical exaltation of deeds against intellectual

reflection is a constant of Facism, where it combines with anti-intellectualism, with the several ethics of conquest and creative vitality, with the notion of the primacy over economic activity of politics conceived of as the building of empires, and as the subjugation of inferior peoples, with the precedence of faith, and ultimately with the destruction of reason [Bobbio (a), 614].

(24) Evola's preference for the archaic period bears some outer resemblance to Bachofen's: 'The balm for Bachofen's isolation and disappointment was Italy [...] not, however, the Italy of his own time. Nor was it the Renaissance Italy, [...] or the Italy of Imperial Rome. It was a much earlier, pre-historical "Italia iteratica e sacerdotale", as he himself put it [...]' [Gossman (b), 170]. Again, however, the resemblance should not be overemphasized, for Bachofen's ideal is that of a land where 'no idea of struggle, of self-discipline, of sin and repentance disturbs the harmony of a life at once sensual and transcending sensuality' [*Mutterrecht*, 593, quoted in *ibidem*]¹—which is very distant indeed from Evola's warrior's ethics and austere military discipline.

tinuum Sparta-Rome-Prussia (25). Possibly the last attempt in Europe to achieve a sacral, organic, hierarchical system founded on the transcendent principles of Tradition, according to Evola, is that of the Holy Roman Empire and the medieval Ghibelline world [*Rivolta*, 350 ff.; *Rovine*, 152 ff.; *Graal, Cinabro*, 127]. Not by chance has the ruin of this world been brought about by the rebellion of Guelph municipalities in cahoots with the Papacy, and not by chance does a misguided 'patriotic' historiography exalt this event on account of its supposed 'national' values, together with other periods of disgregation, like the Renaissance and the *Risorgimento* [e.g., *Rovine*, 117; *Ricognizioni*, 227].

In the last centuries the phases of decadence have followed one another as ineluctably as different stages of the same disease: 'without the French Revolution and liberalism there could have been neither constitutionalism nor democracy; without democracy, socialism and demagogic nationalism would not have been possible; without the preparation of socialism there could not have been radicalism and finally communism' [*Orientamenti*, 15]. To think that such forms be antagonistic to each other, and specifically, that democracy and socialism be the antithesis of communism is sheer delusion: it is not possible to fight the advanced stages of a disease with that same disease in an earlier form. From this viewpoint, also, the antithesis between 'red' Orient and 'democratic' West appears irrelevant [*Americanismo e Bolscevismo*], and tragically irrelevant as well would be a conflict between the blocs. Practical considerations may compel one to see the U.S.A. as the lesser evil—if for no other reason than because a Soviet victory would imply 'immediate physical destruction of the last representatives of resistance' [*Orientamenti*, 16]; but the West does not represent any superior ideal.

These last comments bring us closer to Evola's political doctrine proper, to which attention should now be turned.

(25) 'We have pointed out the real affinities that, concerning values and life-orientations, exist among Sparta, ancient Rome and certain Germanic *Sippe*. On the other hand the difference is clear between what is Roman and what is Latin, and, in part, Italian, with regard to style, temperament, world-view [...] [Mussolini's effort] to make the nation [Italy] more Roman and Fascist [...] could be seen, to a certain extent, as an effort to give it a Prussian imprint' [*Fascismo*, 122-123, italics in the original].

Evola's opposition of the Roman to the Latin/Italian spirit recalls Moeller van den Bruck's contrast between the Prussian and the German ones, after which it may very well have been patterned. In Moeller's view, as expressed in *Der Preussische Stil* (1916), 'the essence of the Prussian spirit

was its simple matter-of-factness [*Sachlichkeit*] [...] the Prussian's unbending devotion to duty, his ready obedience of authority, and his tough conquest of self [...] The German spirit was antithetical to the Prussian spirit, and was characterized by the persistence of the medieval romantic dream of a universal empire, by its poetic exuberance, its impracticability and its feminine weakness' [Stern, 212]. Four years after Moeller's book, Oswald Spengler was to suggest much the same relationship in his *Preussentum und Sozialismus* [Stern, 213]. The centrality of Prussian-like military virtues in the *conservative Revolution* is well-known: one need only to think of E. Jünger's works [f.e., *Kampf, Steel*] whose influence on Evola will be discussed below [*Operaio*].

5. *Political doctrine*

In order to translate the world of Tradition into a set of categories recognizable in a 'modern' theoretical lexicon, the classical Hegelo-Marxian distinction between the State and civil society may be taken as a starting point. In orthodox traditional (but also Hegelian) fashion, Evola reverses the Marxian (and liberal) rank ordering: the State must prevail over civil society.

The latter (i.e., the economy) corresponds to the physical, vegetative, feminine dimensions of a community; it is the *matter* to which the State, as the embodiment of the masculine principle, must give *form*. The definition and pursuit of a collectivity's ultimate ends may only pertain to the political sphere (the State); the economy must be confined, at most, to the realm of means (26). If it trespasses this limit, as in bourgeois society, its power can become 'demony', 'hallucination', the most degraded form of which is present-day consumerism [*Rovine*, 91 ff.].

The radical disparagement of the economy is very much in line with enduring conservative-reactionary notions of the superiority of spiritual dimensions over material ones (27). The attitude was as visible in Fascism, where the citizen, according to Mussolini, was to achieve 'that purely spiritual existence in which his value as a man consists' [quoted in Sheehan, 52], as it was in the *konservative Revolution*, where Moeller's critique of socialism was based on the latter's quest for a 'merely' material place in the world, since, 'as yet the proletariat knows nothing of ideals [...] as yet lives a merely animal existence [...]'. The problem of the proletariat is not that of its outward existence, but of its inner quality' [Moeller, 153, 154] (28).

The rejection of economic values enables Evola to attack simultaneously Marxism (the aberration of considering the economy as 'our destiny' [*Fascismo*, 98]), and capitalism. Again, the longing for a society neither capitalist nor Marxist was a general interwar European attitude [Mosse (a), 8; 109], especially strong in the circles of the *konservative Revolution* (29),

(26) 'The Prussian style demands not only a mere precedence of higher policy over economics; it demands that the economic life should be *disciplined* by a powerful State' [Spengler, 191, italics original].

(27) '[All anti-democratic thinkers believe that] the epoch-making men are the *Condottieri*, the conquerors, the great statesmen. On the contrary, the role of businessmen, bankers, industrialists, speculators, indicates a society's decline' [Bobbio (a), 611]. Accordingly, Evola quotes with approval Spengler's *dictum* that the prevalence of the economic sphere corresponds to a culture's downward trend—its descent to

the level of a mere *Zivilisation* [*Fascismo*, 99].

(28) And again: 'The masses continue to envisage the whole problem as an economic one. The proletarian does not dream of a higher, more spiritual standpoint' [Moeller, 154]. What Mosse refers to in Eugen Diederichs' *New Romanticism* ('indeed we are never told how twenty million workers could be kept employed while a spiritual society was being established' [Mosse (a), 55]) can be generalized to the whole *konservative Revolution*.

(29) This longing typically took the form of a search for a 'third way' between capi-

and one that Fascism and Nazism were going to exploit with much skill (30), along a path that present-day Radical Right groups are trying to pursue on their own (31).

Economy's counterpart, the political sphere, 'is defined in terms of hierarchical, heroic, ideal, anti-hedonistic, even anti-eudemonistic values, which remove [existence] from the naturalistic-vegetative order', casting it towards a superior dimension of life, a distinct order of dignity [*Rovine*, 32]. For the origin of the State cannot come from below, from the people (the latter model being 'an ideological perversion of modern times, corresponding to a phase of *regression*' [*Rivolta*, 43, italics original]), but must be found in a higher sphere, as called for by traditional principles: 'Le pouvoir véritable ne peut venir que d'en haut, et c'est pourquoi [...] il ne peut être légitimé que par la sanction de quelque chose de supérieur à l'ordre social, c'est-à-dire d'une autorité spirituelle' [Guénon (b), 87-88].

And it is through service to the State in terms of honour, loyalty, heroic and military values that individual life acquires a 'superior' significance, transcending mere naturalistic existence [*Fascismo*, 28]. Here again, the opposition of heroic-military values to materialistic, positivistic, economic-utilitarian ones (warriors against merchants; fighters against shopkeepers), is well within the tradition of anti-democratic, anti-liberal, reactionary thought. ('In metapolitics, even the price of potatoes must be heroic' [Viereck, 243]). Early twentieth-century Italian irrationalistic trends, the

talism and socialism. Its presence in most components of the *conservative Revolution* (it 'occupied the economic formulations of the *Völkish* movement'; 'the *Youth Movement* was in search of the "Third Way"', etc.), leads Mosse to conclude that 'the search for a "third way" as an alternative to capitalism or marxism occupied much of German thought during Weimar' [Mosse (a), 281]. The bible of the *conservative Revolution*, Moeller's *Third Reich*, beginning with its very title indicates the author's intent to move in this direction. In it, the adjective 'third' should be read more in a synchronic than in a diachronic meaning: originally Moeller had planned to entitle the work 'The Third Party' or 'The Third Point of View' and only as a 'happy afterthought' the word 'Reich' was found, enabling Moeller to appropriate an old German myth [Stern, 154], and, incidentally, to provide Nazism with one of its most powerful symbols.

(30) In official Fascist propaganda, 'the image that finally prevailed to the point of becoming a dominant motive [...] was [...]: Fascism as a third way. Take all the

antitheses which tear the twentieth century apart: individualism-collectivism, private-collective ownership, capital-labour, nationalism-cosmopolitanism, liberalism-socialism, market economy-planned economy, and so forth and so on, draw the average, or the synthesis among the ones and the others, and you'll have the essence of Fascist doctrine' [Bobbio (a), 621].

(31) Both the 'cultural' (*Nuova Destra, Nouvelle Droite*) and the 'revolutionary' component of the Radical Right in Italy and France claim to be pursuing a 'third way' which renders obsolete the ancient right-left dichotomy. One of the revolutionary groups of the 1970s in Italy (disbanded after the massacre at Bologna station) was called *Terza Posizione*, and its journal had the same name. *Troisième Voie* is the official organ of *Jeune Nation Solidariste*, a contemporary French group; the acts of the XVII conference of G R E C E, the most representative group of the French *Nouvelle Droite* were titled: *La Troisième Voie*. The examples could be multiplied. [See *below*, section 7]. On the issue, see: Ferraresi (c); Galeotti; Revelli.

German *konservative Revolution*, then Fascism and Nazism provide an immense storehouse of materials in this direction (32). But while many of these thinkers, as we have seen, reject rational calculations in the name of dark, primeval, instinctual forces (race, *Volk*, blood, etc.) [see *above*, p. 116], Evola's insistence, at least in the first instance, is for austere military-like discipline, where the 'romantic instinctive element' be subordinated to a 'cold, lucid heroism', leading man to love even 'the most destructive situations because, being elementary, they offer him the chance to reach the stage that could be called of 'the absolute being' [*Rovine*, 143] (33) (in the first instance because, as will be seen, the qualities of blood and race are never too far back in the portraits of Evola's heroes).

The notion that only within this framework does it make sense to talk of individual freedom and liberty (*positive* freedom; freedom *for* something, against the 'merely negative', atomistic freedom of the liberals) [*Rovine*, 51; *Fascismo*, 42] also fits well within the conservative and reactionary tradition.

(32) It is difficult to choose examples in such a wealth of materials. Here are some: 'It is to us [the Fascists], as to the martyrs of the Church, to the Crusaders, to the Knights Templars, to our ancestors of the heroic times of Rome of the *Risorgimento*, that God has reserved the honour of combat, the privilege of sacrifice, the pride of struggling for an ideal of salvation and power. For this we are grateful to Him, for we feel the inimitable beauty of this pioneers' and fighters' life, the peerless fortune [...] [of living in this time of] heroisms, of arduous, of faiths capable of moving mountains, of shining wills — a time contrary to that of paltry ambitions, white-collar careers, materialistic ideals' [Giani, 215]. And from the German versant: 'Blood rises up against formal understanding, race against the rational pursuit of ends, honor against profit, bonds against the caprice that is called "freedom", organic totality against individualistic dissolution, valor against bourgeois security, politics against the primacy of the economy, state against society, *Volk* against the individual and the mass' [E. Krieck, *Nationalpolitische Erziehung*, quoted in Marcuse, 4]. Niccoló Giani was one of the young 'idealists' of the Milanese *Scuola di Mistica Fascista* (School for Fascist Mystique), and as such may have been somewhat marginal (although his ideas are well in line with dominant stereotypes). Nothing marginal, on the other hand, about Ernst Krieck: another one of the *führenden Köpfen* of the *konservative*

Revolution, and early member of the Nazi Party, Professor of Pedagogics at the University of Heidelberg between 1934 and 1945 [Mohler, 480], Krieck was an immensely influential educator during the Third Reich. (The book just quoted—*Nationalpolitische Erziehung*—published in 1932, by 1933 had reached the sixteenth impression [Marcuse, 271]).

(33) Reference should be made instead to those authors of the *konservative Revolution* for whom the experience of war (the First World War) 'had been a trial that [...] had caused a process of purification and liberation' [*Fascismo* 152]. Chief among them, in Evola's evaluation, E. Jünger: 'for a certain generation [war] had also been the principle of a "heroic realism", the crucible where, "in storms of steel" a new human type had been moulded, which Jünger described and to whom he thought the future was reserved'. Insistence here was especially on the need to reach, via 'positive nihilism', the 'zero point' of bourgeois values, in order to reconstruct a rigorously organized new Reich, having as its backbone and animating force the new human type [*Fascismo* 153]. Jünger's book where these notions are most clearly put forth is *Der Arbeiter*, which Evola summarized and translated into Italian [*Operaio*; by Jünger see also *Steel; Kampf*]. For the relevance of notions like 'heroic realism', 'positive nihilism', 'zero point values', etc., in Evola's teachings, see *below*, pp. 132 ff.

In this connection, *myth* acquires a crucial importance, 'in the Sorelian sense of an *idée-force*, a crystallizing notion for the creative energies and instincts of an epoch' [*Razza*, 4]. The mention of Sorel here is *de rigueur*, and not only because Evola quotes him; however, the similarity of the two positions should not be overemphasized. For Sorel, and French revolutionary syndicalists in general, myth is a powerful instrument of mass agitation. The masses being considered as intellectually inferior to single individuals, they can be mobilized only by way of simplified, powerful images, as Le Bon had taught (34); the notions of direct workers' action, of proletarian violence and the myth of the general strike are to be seen in this perspective [Sternhell (a), 152 ff.; 338 ff.]. Evola, on the other hand, true to his aristocratic, *konservativrevolutionäre* standpoint, rejects similar possibilities as distasteful, since only vulgar demagogues court the masses and involve them in political life (35). Myth, for him, should have an uplifting, ('anagogic') effect, as 'a superior, animating idea', a 'galvanizing force', capable of transforming the State 'into something more than a mere structure of public administration' [*Fascismo*, 21] and should be sought within the stores of a people's traditions [*Rovine*, 115]: hence, Fascism was entirely correct in making of ancient Rome its central myth (36), and

(34) 'Les foules, ne pouvant penser que par images, ne se laissent impressionner que par les images. Seules les images les terrifient ou les séduisent, et deviennent des mobiles d'action' [Le Bon, 56].

(35) 'The formula "politicize the masses" must be rejected. The majority of a healthy and well ordered nation must not engage in politics. The Fascist trinomial " authority, order, justice " preserves an unshakable validity for the true State' [*Fascismo*, 139]. Correspondingly, Evola condemns not only (and predictably) democratic systems, but whatever in 'yesterday's regimes' (i.e., Fascism and Nazism) appears as a concession to thrusts from below, beginning with Mussolini's '*ducismo*', his quest for a Bonapartist, tribune's prestige, seen as 'if not a demagogic, at least a somewhat democratic [hence reprehensible] inclination to "go to the people", to search for the applause of the crowds' [*Fascismo*, 59]. (Against this, the correct formulation of Fascist doctrine is to be seen in Mussolini's statements like the following: 'I do not adore the new divinity, mass. It is a product of democracy and socialism' [*Fascismo*, 60]).

Even stronger is Evola's critique against the 'populist, fanatical, plebeian aspects of Hitlerism' [*Cinabro*, 137]. Here again he fully identifies with his *konservativrevolutionäre* friends, who considered Nazism

as effective for the 'preliminary work' of 'eliminating socialism, communism and democracy', and collaborated with it in this task, waiting, however, for a chance to achieve their real goal, i.e., the re-establishment of a traditional order; Nazism's unexpected successes indefinitely postponed this agenda [*ibidem*]. After the war, Evola had some particularly scathing things to say about Hitler's vulgar demagoguery, especially in writing [e.g., *Fascismo*, 180]. (In private his tone seems to have been rather different: '[Hitler] was a *magister rationalis*—he would say, stressing the words, to admiring disciples—a genius' [Salierno, 42]). More in general, Evola, although critical of Hitler's timing and strategy, is in full agreement with the Nazi ultimate war aims. To his eyes, 'no price would have been too high' if a war miraculously won by the Axis powers would have permitted 'to break the backbone of Soviet Russia, possibly causing a major crisis in international communism; [...] to humiliate the U.S.A. expelling them from European politics; [...] to reduce British power [...] but not as much as "victory" did; [...] to prevent China's fall to communism [...]; to avoid the insurrection of coloured people hence the end of European world hegemony' [*Fascismo*, 128-129].

(36) Evola does not seem disturbed by

so was Nazism in reaching back to the Hoenstaufen mythology, together, of course, with the Aryo-German one (37).

As against these referents, concepts like those of *nation* and *fatherland* are rejected because of their naturalistic-collectivistic origin ('les enfants de la patrie'): again, they indicate a 'matter' which must be 'formed' by the State [*Rivolta*, 43; *Fascismo*, 24]. Furthermore, in modern Western history, nations have been responsible for the disruption of the European *imperial order*, an unforgivable deed, whatever 'patriotic' historiography, inspired by liberal-masonic values, may say to it [*Rovine*, 117 ff.] (38). Even more radical are Evola's notions concerning the *people*: 'only of an élite may one say that "it is of a race", "it has race" [in the French meaning of *racé* for 'of good breed']': the people are only people, mass' [*Fascismo*, 106].

The State is to the people as the olympian and uranic principle is to the chthonian and *inferus* one, as 'idea' and 'form' [...] are to 'matter' and 'nature' [...]; thus in the same relation of a luminous, masculine, differentiating, individualizing and fecundating principle in the face of an unstable, promiscuous, nightly feminine substance [...] Ultimately, the substance of *demos* is 'demonic' [...]; it always needs a catharsis, a liberation, before it can operate as the force and matter of a traditional political system [*Rivolta*, 43-44] (39).

This disparagement of the people-nation couple, it may be noted incidentally, places Evola in the exactly opposite position to Gramsci's evaluation of the same, as in his well-known appraisal of *national-popular* characters.

the fact that the Rome to which Fascism referred was not that of the *patres*, but the 'classical' one. He does, however, acknowledge that a real probe of the Roman symbol did not take place in Fascism, while the parroting of Roman ceremonials often took on veritable comic-opera aspects.

(37) Quest for *mythos* within the *Volk* was, of course, central to German 'New Romanticism', and to the *Völkisch* movement in general [Mosse (a), 63 ff.]. This is one reason why Nazism was more successful than Fascism in making its myths come true. The latter was hampered partly by 'the texture of the Italian people', partly by the Catholic hostility to the pagan component of Roman mythology, partly, and, more importantly, by the unbridged hiatus of millennia existing between Roman symbols and Fascist times. Nazism was more fortunate, in that it could link with the continuation of Germanic mythology that had been kept up in the previous centuries. [In a similar sense, also Mosse (b)].

(38) The indictment of modern nations

as the destroyers of the medieval *koiné* is, of course, standard traditionalist thinking: see, e.g., Guénon (b), 105.

(39) The attribution of priority to the State over the nation was clear in Fascist doctrine. Mussolini's statements like the following: 'Without the State, no nation is possible [...]' It is not the nation that generates the State. Instead, the nation is created by the State, which gives the people [...] a will, hence a real existence' [quoted in *Fascismo*, 23, 24] correspond *verbatim* to those of Fascism's official philosopher (and one of Evola's main foes) G. Gentile: 'It is not the nation that generates the State, as the stale nineteenth century nation-state literature claimed. The nation, instead, is created by the State, which gives the people [...] a will, hence a real existence' [Gentile, 847-848]. If, according to Evola, the doctrine was correct, the same cannot be said about Fascist practice, which frequently referred to 'a form of nationalism based on the simple notions of people and fatherland' [*Fascismo*, 32].

Evola's radical *anti-equalitarianism* is an obvious consequence of what has been said so far: 'the "immortal principle" of equality is pure nonsense' [*Rovine*, 45; *Razza*, 14] (40). Hence, the first task of the real State will be to do away with the institutions that derive from this 'nonsense': universal suffrage ('which has reached the point of including even women'), parliaments, political parties, trade unions, etc. The *Weltanschauung* they all express is the one most abhorred by conservative and *ultra* thought: a view of the State and society which stresses individualistic (*vs.* solidaristic), mechanistic (*vs.* organic), quantitative (*vs.* qualitative), atomistic values [*Bobbio*, 602]. Against them, and the rootless fragmentation they express, Evola's quest for a world of firm roots and unchangeable principles ('each in his/her place') is emphatically stated by advocating the integral *hierarchical principle*, and an *organic form of State* (41).

Predictably patterned after traditional and medieval notions (medieval nostalgia being standard counter-revolutionary doctrine), the organic State differs not only (and obviously) from its democratic-parliamentary counterpart, but also from the totalitarian forms. This is so because it admits of inner articulations and differentiations, and even of zones of partial autonomy, within the framework of a superior unity. Although such a State holds absolute power, it does not claim to interfere with all forms of life, nor does it take all tasks upon itself, such being the totalitarian deviations, which Fascism was not always able to avoid, as it did not always avoid the degeneration of hierarchy into hierarchism [*Fascismo*, 35 ff.]. Having rejected all quantitative-democratic forms of representation, not to mention class conflict, the organic state will admit of representation only by orders or corps: namely, and once again predictably, corporatism.

The corollary of anti-equalitarianism is elitism: over and over in his works Evola claims that only an élite, a cohort of superior beings drawing their right to govern not from below (the people) but from purely spiritual qualities ('spiritual virility, decisiveness, impersonality' [*Rovine*, 44]), can be the mainstay of such a state (42).

(40) 'The chimerical prejudice of "equality" goes against all the best established facts, in the intellectual order as well as in the physical order' [Guénon (a), 66; also (b), 84; for Guénon's arguments against democracy ('le plus décisif [...] se résume en quelque mots : le supérieur ne peut émaner de l'inférieur, parce que le "plus" ne peut sortir du "moins"; cela est d'une rigueur mathématique absolue, contre laquelle rien ne saurait prévaloir') see (a), 87-95].

(41) The central significance of *organic thinking* within conservative thought is clearly illustrated in Mannheim (a), 118 ff.; see also (b). Along the same lines Viereck ('the basic assumptions of the romantic

school [were] its new credo of *Volk* and of "organic versus atomistic society"') [p. 64 ff.]. As will be seen below, these are central tenets of the contemporary so-called *New-Right* in France and Italy. The venerable age of such ideas makes it difficult to perceive the grounds on which such groups may base their claim to novelty.

(42) Only an intellectual (i.e., spiritual) élite, according to Guénon, can save the West: (a), 93, 126, 130-133; a whole chapter of *East and West* is dedicated to the 'constitution of the elect and the part to be played by it' [pp. 189-213]. On the several strains of elitism (Nietzschean, Darwinist) prevailing in European upper classes at the turn of the century, see Mayer, 290 ff.

This raises the issue of the most appropriate organizational form for such an élite. Rejecting all naturalistic ties, together with abhorred democratic forms like the political party (including the single party, veritable 'contradiction in terms') [*Fascismo*, 55] Evola advocates a union based on purely ideal values. The form will be 'something like an Order, a "male society" [*Männerbund*] carrying in their hands the principle of *imperium* and holding [...] that loyalty is the basis of their honour' [*Rovine*, 42] (the last clause, it will be recognized, corresponds to the motto of the Nazi SS). The model is, once again, a medieval one, exemplified by chivalry orders, first and foremost the Teutonic Knights (seen as the initiating nucleus of the Prussian State [e.g., *Rovine*, 131]), and the Knights Templar. The knightly orders, in turn, were the model for another (and overlapping) myth of the *conservative Revolution*, the immensely popular *Bund* or *Männerbund*: indeed it is difficult nowadays to realize to what an extent the *Bund* ideal has permeated German thought up to and including Nazism (43). As in the quotation above, Evola tends to use the two

(43) Respectable intellectuals, like Stefan George, whose *Kreis* was trying to promote 'the concept of the "order", such as the Knights Templar of the Crusades' [Mosse (a), 210] were joined in this worship of the *Bund* by sinister crackpots like A. Rosenberg, who claimed the need for a *Männerbund* patterned after the Teutonic Order for the salvation of Germany. 'A state is founded [he argued], not on family but on male-league. All history's creative groups were male-leagues, welded inseparably by honour, battle, and comradeship [...]. [He cited] the ancient Greeks, the Teutonic Knights, the Prussian Officer Corps, the Nazi party' [Viereck, 264].

In the political realm, the concept of *Bund* was central for an entire sector of the *conservative Revolution*, which indeed goes under the name of the *Bündischen*, or *bündische Jugend* [Mohler, 153-161; 256-272]. The boundaries of the sector are not entirely clear. To a large extent it overlapped with the interwar continuation of the *Jugendbewegung*, and it included groups like the *Artamanen* (whose initiator, W. Hentschel, the founder of the utopian settlement Mittgart, had 'called for a concerted effort to form a company of fighting knights to protect the German earth' [Mosse (a), 116]), the *Deutsche Freischar*, the *Adler und Falken*, and especially the *Wandervögel*. These last, and their ideologues, had elevated 'the idea of the *Bund*, of the male society, [...] to a general principle not only of life but of government as well' [*idem*, 177]. This is

especially relevant because it links up with another crucial concern of the *conservative Revolution*, the attempt to go beyond capitalism and communism. 'The *Bund* structure, by means of which the youth were able to organize their members on the basis of strong leadership, while holding them together by ties of Eros and common ideology, appeared as an alternative to both Marxism and capitalist class society' [*ibidem*; on the role of Eros in the *Männerbünde* see Mohler, 158 ff.; on the *Wandervögel*, Lacqueur].

In the same field one should include also another mythical unit, the *Freikorps*, the voluntary Army Corps that had continued to fight on the eastern frontier in defiance of the Peace treaty, and whose 'épopée' [e.g., von Salomon] has provided an enormous store of heroic materials for *conservative-revolutionäre* youth and for the present-day Radical Right in all its strains [Revelli]. Here again, 'the soldiers' experience at the front line had strengthened the idea that the *Bund* of men, bound together by a common spirit, spilling their blood together, was the only valid form of social organization which remained after the catastrophe' [Mosse (a), 226].

And when the separate *Bünde* decided to join together into a broader unit, like the *Jungdeutsche Orden* (1920), believe it or not, they tried to structure themselves 'along the lines of a medieval order of Germanic knights' [*idem*, 228].

Finally, the Nazi Party itself, which later

terms (*Order and Male Society*) as indicating the same phenomenon [e.g., *Razza*, 223; *Rovine*, 138, *Fascismo*, 207]. In his times, the model was embodied by such organizations as José Antonio's Spanish *Falange*, the Romanian *Legion of the Archangel*, or *Iron Guard*, whose 'Captain', C. Codreanu, is one of Evola's great heroes (hence of the contemporary Radical Right, all over Europe) (44), and especially by the élite guards of Nazism, the SS, to which long, admiring pages are dedicated [e.g., *Fascismo*, 209-218; *Razza*, 224-225], extolling not only the superior type of human being they promoted, but also the *Ordenstaatgedanke* they incarnated, that is, the idea of a State governed by an *order* (and not by a party).

Anti-equalitarianism, anti-democratism, elitism: not suprisingly, Evola was also a racist. Indeed, it would not really be worth spending more than a few words on this aspect of his thought, were it not that some qualified recognition for Evola's brand of racism has come from a respected scholar of Fascism, R. de Felice, in a book devoted to the predicament of the Italian Jews under Fascism (45). These statements have been seized by Evola's disciples, and displayed as a sort of a safe-conduct for clearing Evola's past record [e.g., Ar. *Nota introduttiva*, viii-x; de Turris, 76-77]. The episode, in turn, brings to light Evola's shrewd ambiguities in this, as in other touchy political areas, and requires some clarification.

That Evola was a racist cannot be doubted, among other reasons because he claims it to his own credit. In his opinion, the myth of race was to be an important weapon for Fascism's struggle against the chief evils of modern society: universalism, individualism, rationalism, evolutionism [*Razza*, 11-24] and for the reconstruction of Italian society (46). But he scorned purely biological notions of race in favour of a 'spiritual' concept: this inner character, however, was to be in harmony with somatic traits. The pattern of Evola's argument (and ambiguity) on this point

on became a mass-party, i.e., the very opposite of a *Bund*, had, originally, a *bündisch* nature, and retained some of its characters, such as: the leadership principle, Eros, as a cohesive force especially in the S.A., the male exclusiveness of the élite structure of the party, etc. [*ibidem*. For some aspects of the discussion on *Männerbunde*, see Ginzburg].

(44) See, e.g., the special issue of *Totalité* (18/19, Summer 1984) dedicated to the Iron Guard, with the title: 'Un mouvement chevaleresque au XX^e siècle: la Garde de Fer', containing among others two 1938 articles by Evola, which will be presently discussed.

(45) 'In the face of such a picture [several Italian intellectuals' stooping to antisemitism after 1938 out of opportunistic reasons] one is compelled to register [...] that, in a sense,

among men of culture, the most worthy of respect were the convinced racists [...] like] Evola, those who, once they had chosen a path, were able to follow it with dignity and even in seriousness, compared to the many who chose the route of falsehood, of base insult, of total obnubilation of any and all moral and cultural values [...]' [de Felice, 385].

(46) His main text in this domain [*Razza*; see also *Sangue*] was written with the stated purpose of providing Fascism with a 'correct' (as against all amateurish) race doctrine, and is full of extravagant praises of Fascism [e.g., pp. 266 ff.]. On his part, Mussolini authorised Evola to call the German edition of the book *Grundriß der Faschistischen Rassenlehre*, adding the adjective 'Fascist'.

is very similar to the one that emerges in other, connected areas of his doctrine: the superiority of a group, a caste, an élite, etc., is claimed on purely spiritual grounds, but then it is blood that transmits such 'spiritual' features [e.g., *Rivolta*, 57; *Razza*, 267-8]; States must be ruled by élites bound by purely spiritual values, but then it is to old aristocracies that he looks for providing such élites [*Ricognizioni*, 222; *Cinabro*, 136-137]; virility is a spiritual, not a biological quality, but a virile woman would be against nature; etc. In the case of race, the starting point is the notion that beings are composed of three elements, body, soul, and spirit, each corresponding to a notion (degree) of race, the higher and most important being, predictably, the spiritual. The ideal objective is the harmonious integration of the three, and it is indeed in this direction (the reconstruction of the Roman-Aryan type) that Fascism operates [*Razza*, 266 ff.]. In most cases, however, the soul-body-spirit integration is lacking (usually because of 'confused crossbreedings', i.e., miscegenation) and persons belonging to a given physical race do not possess the corresponding spiritual or inner characters. The rejection of a purely physical notion of racial purity is at the origin of Evola's critique of biological racism and, during Fascism, it provoked a series of attacks on him by 'orthodox' racists (47) (while Mussolini, at least in theory, accepted his views [*Cinabro*, 155; de Felice, 251, 252]). This is, presumably, the standpoint that elicits de Felice's grudging acknowledgement (48). In his postwar writings, Evola claims that it enabled him to keep his distance from 'vulgar anti-semitism' [*Cinabro*, 158], on the ground that there is no necessary correspondence between Jewish blood and Jewish spirit, nor, for that matter, between physical and spiritual 'aryanism' [*Cinabro*, 153].

The trouble with this distinction between the 'spiritual' and the 'physical' dimension of race, however, is that, within its framework, the Jewish spirit is constantly depicted as the negative pole, the destructive, disgregating force, against whatever is positive, solar, virile, etc., typically represented by the Aryan: 'that treacherous style, that style of slavish hypo-

(47) E.g., G. Landra, 'Razzismo biologico e scientismo. Per la scienza e contro i melanconici assertori di un nebuloso spiritualismo', in: *La Difesa della Razza*, VI, 1, November 5, 1942, pp. 9-11; G. Almirante, 'Ché la diritta via era smarrita [...]' (Contro le « pecorelle » dello pseudo-razzismo antibiologico), in: *La Difesa della Razza*, V, 13, May 5, 1942.

(48) 'This does not mean that the "spiritualist" race theory was acceptable. However, it had at least the merit of taking into some account certain values, of rejecting German and German-like aberrations. Moreover, it tried to keep racism (which unquestionably, from Boulainvilliers to Gobineau and Renan, from Herder to Kant

and Nietzsche, from Fichte to Vacher de Lapouge had had its own cultural and ethical value, besides the political ones) on the grounds of a cultural debate worthy of the name' [de Felice, 386]. The questionable clause in parenthesis elicit the polite but stern disapproval of de Felice's teacher, the great historian D. Cantimori: 'Weight and importance can be. But value, if the term implies any form of positive evaluation, I don't think can be accepted. Even if they come from great men or great "people", perversions have neither cultural nor ethical value—although they may have much weight and carry dire consequences' ['Preface' to de Felice, xvi].

crisy, and at the same time, sly, disgregating infiltration, which [is] a constant feature of the Jewish instinct' [*Problema ebraico*, 26]. Believing that such spirit may be embodied also by Gentiles can hardly be considered a pro-Jewish attitude. And indeed, the clearest indicator of the degeneration of modern society is the prevalence, in it, of a typically Jewish trait, 'mammonism', i.e., the worship of money and economic concerns [e.g., *Problema ebraico*, 61]. The most trite commonplaces of anti-Semitism ensue, including reference to the infamous *Protocols* (49). Contrary to Evola's claims (which de Felice seems to support) (50) this standpoint did not prevent him from approving Fascism's racist legislation, as a 'natural countermeasure' caused by 'the antifascist politics of international Jewry' [*Cinabro*, 149; *Fascismo*, 105] (51).

But the most lurid statements on this topic can be found in a couple of 1938 articles (*never reprinted in Evola's lifetime*) (52) on the 'tragedy' of the Rumanian 'Iron Guard' or 'Legion of the Archangel' [*Guardia di Ferro*]. It has already been mentioned that C. Codreanu, the Guard's Captain, is one of Evola's heroes, and these writings are veritable hymns of praise to Codreanu after the latter's assassination (53). [On the Iron Guard in general, see Barbu (a) and (b); Weber; Georgescu]. The aspect of Codreanu's politics that meets with Evola's highest approval is the struggle against 'the Judaic horde' [*Guardia*, 11]. As early as his university days, Evola recounts, 'Codreanu had a clear idea of what a communist takeover in Rumania would mean: [...] the country's enslavement [...] to "the filthiest tyranny, the talmudic, Israelite tyranny"', and denounced it loudly. 'But Israel does not forgive him who takes her mask away. Immediately Codreanu became the *bête noire* of Israel-financed press [...]. Of that time Codreanu writes "In a year I have learned enough anti-

(49) 'It must be recognized at the outset that the course of political and social history in modern Europe seems actually patterned after the objectives set up by the *Protocols* [...] The question is: how far can the acolytes of Jewry be considered as the directing elements, or at least those who favoured such developments?' Evola's 'considerate judgment' on the question is the following: 'the most plausible hypothesis is that the action of the Jewish element [...] be more of an instinctive and almost non-voluntary, hence diffused nature, than corresponding to a unified idea, hence to a plan and a predetermined technique' [*Problema ebraico*, 56, 61; Evola wrote the Preface to the Italian edition of the *Protocols*].

(50) '[Spiritual racism enabled its upholders] to carry out, within the "Fascist system", a critique of the most serious political aspect, namely antisemitism' [de Felice, 386].

(51) In his postwar writings, Evola points out, supposedly with implicit approval, that Fascist measures had been by far milder than those of Nazism. For the massacres carried out in Germany 'no justification or excuse can be admitted' [*Fascismo*, 190]. He hastens to claim that 'neither I nor my German friends knew of the Nazi excesses against Jews, and certainly, had we known, we could not have approved them' [*Cinabro*, 159].

(52) Neither are they recorded in de Turrís' list of 'Principal Articles and Essays by Julius Evola' [de Turrís, 181-186].

(53) 'Among the many leaders of national movements we have met in the course of our European journeys, few, not to say none, have left with us such a favourable impression as Codreanu. With few others have we been able to find such a perfect coincidence of ideas [...]' [*Guardia*, 8].

Semitism to last me for three lifetimes"'. His followers' actions, who 'assaulted and smashed the printing houses of the Jewish rags that insulted King, Army, Church' were but a sacrosanct reaction to Jewish provocations [*ibidem*]. As a development of these early convictions, the Legion's program contained the outline of an anti-Semitic campaign, thus tersely summarized: 'a) identification of the Jewish spirit and mentality, which slyly infiltrated in Rumanian minds [...]; b) purging [of Rumania] via the elimination of Judaism [...]; c) uncovering and unmasking of Israel's plans, under whichever guise they may be camouflaged [...]' [*ibidem*]. And the final accolade: 'Codreanu saw clearly that Judaism has been able to dominate the world via Freemasonry, and Russia via Communism. "Mussolini, who has destroyed communism and masonry—Codreanu says—has implicitly declared war also on Jewry"'. Evola's conclusion: 'The recent [1938] antisemitic turn of Fascism proves that Codreanu was entirely right' [*Guardia*, 14] (54).

So much for 'racism of the spirit'.

6. *Directions for action: from 'Men among Ruins' to 'Active Nihilism' and 'Apoliteia'*

Although most of Evola's writing is kept at a lofty level, much above everyday contingencies ('metapolitics'), in the first postwar years he does offer some guidance for action. The 1950 pamphlet, *Orientamenti*, is directed to the youth groups 'who had kept themselves from being dragged into the general collapse' [*Cinabro*, 162]. For them, *Orientamenti* was to provide some sort of essential catalogue of the 'positions to be held', summarized in the sentence: 'Ideal, Order, élite, Men of the Order—thus the ranks should be held, as far as possible' [*Orientamenti*, 24]. In this tract, the notions of *uomo differenziato* and *spirito legionario* are particularly stressed; they will become absolutely crucial in the Radical Right's *Weltanschauung* of the coming years.

This is the period in which Evola envisions the possibility of rallying all forces of the Right (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*—the 'official' neo-fascist party—healthy corps of the state, like police and paratroopers, veteran groups, etc.) in order to take over Italian society, rescuing in it what is still good ('salvare il salvabile' [*Rovine*, 139]), and keeping the whole from being destroyed.

The 1953 book *Gli uomini e le Rovine* is a major effort to provide a state doctrine in support of such a project (55). Significantly, J.V. Borghese

(54) On the analogies between Fascism, Nazism, and Legionarism, Evola had previously stated: 'We believe that all Fascists must be informed [...] of the woeful and tragic moments of a struggle which, on the Rumanian soil, has followed the same path

as that of our antidemocratic and *anti-Jewish* revolutions' [*Guardia*, 8; italics added].

(55) Evola considered it 'the last attempt to promote a grouping of the true right' [*Cinabro*, 165].

a famous war hero, one-time president of M S I, and future leader of *coup d'état* attempts, wrote the book's preface (56). The doctrinal *topoi* are familiar: counter-revolution, transcendent character of State and politics against the economy, organic nature of the true State, need for an anti-bourgeois, heroic, warrior's conception of life: in the present circumstances, urgent necessity for men capable to 'stand among the ruins' in order to 'stem the disaster'. The immediate task is that of 'reinforcing the State', while, *malgré soi*, keeping it within the Western alliance (*malgré soi* because American materialism is as much an enemy of traditional values as Russian totalitarian collectivism).

The notion of using the forces of the 'true Right' for the defense of the State against subversion corresponds to a lasting concern of Evola's. Industrial society has made of the State a hostage in the hands of trade unions and organized masses, which can jam the whole machinery with strikes and sabotages. The Army and the police, 'given the level reached in Italy by the communist gangrene', might not be able to provide an adequate defense. Hence the need, for the right, to gradually organise a close network of task forces, 'ready to quickly intervene against all possible emergencies', in order first and foremost to uphold 'against the rabble, the State and its authority (even when it is an "empty State")' [*Fascismo*, 135].

The strategy adumbrated in *Gli uomini e le Rovine*, however, very soon appears to have no realistic foundations. M S I sinks ever deeper into the swamps of parliamentary politicking; throughout society materialistic values triumph, while the 'economic miracle' ushers in the most debased form of consumerism. Far from being unique, the Italian predicament mirrors that of the West as a whole. The 1961 text, *Cavalcare la Tigre*, contains a scathing indictment of this condition. Values, institutions, and behaviours everywhere are corrupted, debased, and crumbling; this world is reaching the final stage of its involution, the *Kali-yuga*, the obscure age of ancient prophecies; nothing in it is worthy of survival; destruction is the fate it deserves.

The perception of living in a world of ruins is a favourite theme of the *konservative Revolution*, where the shattering effects of the First World War on the old order are intertwined with Nietzsche's suggestions, giving origin to a peculiar brand of nihilism. According to its exegetes, German nihilism is to be set apart from both its brethren, the exhausted and enervated French form, a product of existential *ennui*, and the Russian one, a 'nihilism of fullness', of unlimited spaces, of inexhaustible expanses. Half-way between the two, German nihilism claims to be 'positive' insofar as it believes that destruction need not be an end in itself, but is necessary in order for reconstruction to be possible [Mohler, 94-95]: 'in times

(56) The general conception, the strategic plans and the actors of the attempted Borghese coup (December, 1970) present striking similarities with Evola's outlines.

Ordine Nuovo, one of the groups whose very name embodies Evola's teachings, was to play a crucial role in it [Ferraresi (c), 57 ff.].

of disease and defeat, poisons are medicaments' [Jünger, 1929, 197] (57).

Evola moves within this universe, but at a more detached, aloof, dispassionate pace. No hope of reconstruction supports him, nor the thought of a new social order to be resurrected from the ruins. Will-power and super-human qualities are, by themselves, insufficient for carrying man beyond good and evil; God's death is only a pathos-filled metaphor. In a long, painstaking confrontation with Nietzsche [*Cavalcare*, 44-99], Evola attempts to map the way for his 'active nihilist', 'anarchist of the Right' (58)—a man who must live *in* this (modern) society, but who definitely is not *of* it.

This is the bourgeois world, the world of progress, of science, of linear time, of history. Over and over Evola stresses the radical estrangement of the 'differentiated man' from it. As such, heteronomous morals can have no meaning for him, together with the notions of terrestrial or extra-terrestrial rewards, and those of happiness, pleasure or pain. For such a man (sexist terminology is quite in order here), *being purely himself, living according to his own nature*, is the only possible imperative. Unlike Kant's, such an imperative is not based on an abstract law of practical reason, but on the person's specific nature: hence, the contents of each one's law are and must remain indetermined [*Cavalcare*, 54, 58]. How to search for one's own nature, how to identify and 'test' it, are the main concerns of Evola's research in *Cavalcare la Tigre*. The aim is to strive for transcendence via a process of veritable *ontological rupture* (59) carrying the individual to supreme identity with himself, hence with absolute being—from 'living more' to 'more than living' (*mehr leben* vs. *mehr-als-leben*) [*Cavalcare*, 68] (60).

Once one's true, 'differentiated' nature has been established, the question remains, How is one to act in this alien world? . Once again, the answer lies in *following one's own inner law*, with existential detachment from the surroundings, at the same time, however, 'assuming' all that in life can be negative, tragic, absurd, painful, and problematic [*Cavalcare*, 75, 77]. Such is the real sense of Nietzsche's *amor fati*: not a passive obedience to external conditionings, but the positive attitude of him who faces the dangers, uncertainties, and chaos of life with the determination that only his own inner law will be followed [*Cavalcare*, 79]. This corresponds also to the *konservativrevolutionäre* notion of 'heroic realism' [Mohler,

(57) The expression is quoted, without giving credit, in *Cinabro*, 69.

(58) 'The "anarchist of the right" [...] differs from the others because he does not negate [this world] just for the sake of denial; he does it in the name of values which are all but ignored by the existing order, because he rejects the bourgeois world, because he yearns for a higher form of liberty, not without a rigorous discipline' [*Cinabro*, 212]. On the similar notion of

'Prussian anarchism' (in this universe of discourse, oxymorons are the rule more than the exception), see Mohler, 96. For a self-definition of 'disciples' in terms of 'anarchists of the right', see *Risguardo* IV, 223.

(59) The expression 'rupture de niveau' is frequent in Guénon [Meroz, 94].

(60) The formula is taken from Simmel: *Cinabro*, 20.

123 ff.; *Cinabro*, 194]; not by chance did Evola write a tract on that 'bible of heroic realism' [Mohler, 126], E. Jünger's *Arbeiter* [*Operaio*]. Together with these notions, traditional oriental formulas such as 'action without desire', and 'acting without acting' [*Cavalcare*, 88; *Cinabro*, 31] (61) are evoked by Evola in the effort to overcome the contradiction between absolute acting in, and absolute detachment/estrangement from, this world.

As can be seen, in this last major text of Evola's, the author's ontological and methodological premises (supreme position of 'being'; rejection of any positivistic gnoseology, etc.) are brought to bear on the social theory (corruption of the modern world), and result in a political standpoint where the indictment of contemporary society is rooted in a radical rejection of history and historical times. Several intellectual strains come together in this doctrine, Evola's own version of idealism, traditionalist thought, nihilism and *konservevrevolutionäre* models, oriental and esoteric teachings being probably the most important. Add to this the sententious style, the arcane terminology, the often intentional obscurities: *Cavalcare la Tigre* is certainly not an easy text, again, intentionally. Over and over Evola advises that it is for the few, for the very few, reiterating Nietzsche's warning that the appeal to 'be oneself' can be directed only to a small number, and even smaller is the number of those who can pay heed to it [*Cavalcare*, 59; *Cinabro*, 198].

Understandably, then, *Cavalcare* has created much controversy in the quarrelsome sect of 'J. Evola's Witnesses'. Possibly the major point of contention deals with the attitude that should be followed concerning politics. Evola is very explicit in denying that the contemporary political realm contain anything worth fighting for: states, parties, institutions, leaders, projects, are uniformly devoid of any value. The hopes that had sustained *Gli uomini e le Rovine* are explicitly disclaimed: 'we cannot but openly acknowledge that the necessary conditions for obtaining, through a struggle of that sort, a result whatsoever, appreciable and concrete, are at present entirely lacking' [*Cavalcare*, 214]. For the 'differentiated' man the only possible conclusion is to adopt an attitude of 'lack of interest and detachment concerning all what is nowadays "politics"'. His [the differentiated man's] principle will be then what the ancients called "apoliteia" [*Cavalcare*, 215]. No 'interruption of discourse', apparently, could be more radical. The protreptic, however, carries the seeds of ambivalence: "'apoliteia", detachment—Evola claims—concern only the inner attitude; [... they] need not lead to any specific consequences in the realm of pure and simple activity; [they] do not carry as a necessary corollary practical abstentionism' [*Cavalcare*, 216].

It is probably not exaggerated to say that the most important cleavage within the Radical Right in postwar Italy can be read as that between two possible developments of the notion of 'apoliteia'. On the one side are

(61) Guénon's influence is crucial in this domain. See, e.g., his use of notions like 'le détachement, dans l'activité "non

agissante"' [(c), 80], or 'the Far Eastern theory of "Non Doing" and the Hindu theory of "Deliverance"' [(a), 94].

those who claim to have taken it in the literal meaning of withdrawal from politics (parliamentary and party politics, that is) and concentration on purely cultural concerns. Many of them, at the end of the 1970s, gave origin to the *Nuova Destra*, whose ambitious self-definition (*Nuova Cultura*), indicates the ostensibly non-political orientation of their activity. Within the context of present-day Italian society, their attempt has implied, far from an interruption of discourse, the effort to seize, in their own terms, the bases for a dialogue with the representatives of the dominant culture. (That such an attempt be non-political only in words should be obvious to anyone). On the other side are those who condemn as treason any coming to terms with the system, and claim that the only way through which the 'differentiated man' can be true to the laws of his own nature, thus achieving supreme identity with his being, is through extreme political engagement, in the form of 'militia', 'heroic path', or 'holy war', the aim being the total destruction of the rotten and decaying texture of modern society [Freda (a)]. Even the most savage means are not to be eschewed, for the laws of this world are inapplicable to those who believe in a higher reality, and the 'grandiosity of the end' should do away with any scruples concerning the choice of means [Freda (b), 87].

7. *The Radical Right in postwar Italy*

A full analysis of the development of the Radical Right in postwar Italy cannot be carried out within the framework of this paper. [More extensive treatments in Ferraresi (c); (e)]. The present paragraph contains, in the crudest form, some sketchy suggestions about the way in which Evola's influence may have operated in the two principal strains of the Radical Right.

7.1. *'Revolutionaries' and warriors*

The development of the 'revolutionary' right in postwar Italy can be divided roughly into four periods. The first, covering the years from the end of the war to the mid-fifties, is the period in which, thanks to the Cold War atmosphere, neo-fascism is allowed to re-emerge and organize as an anti-communist force. A multitude of small militant groups and organizations appear then, and are engaged as shock troops against the 'red threat'. At the parliamentary level, the major neo-fascist party, M S I (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*) is founded in 1946.

The second period goes roughly from the mid-fifties to the mid-seventies, and can be further divided in two sub-phases. The first of them, going approximately until the mid-sixties ('opening to the Left'), is characterized by the emergence and consolidation of the two 'historic groups' of the extra-parliamentary Right, *Ordine Nuovo* and *Avanguardia Nazionale*, the radical youth's answer to M S I's compromise with parliamentary prin-

ciples [Weinberg, 2 ff.]. Most groups of the preceding period have by now disappeared, and these two come to dominate the field. They are critically important because they provide the personal and ideological continuity, the cementing *trait d'union* linking the fascist veterans of the 1940s with the youngest generations of 'spontaneista' terrorism of the 1980s.

Besides militant activities, O N is concerned also with ideological-doctrinal discussions; A N is much more of a straightforward semi-military organization, brutal in words and deeds ('Before an expedition our men are trained to smash the bones even of somebody who kneels down and weeps'), without much apparent interest for conceptual reflection.

Ordine Nuovo is founded in 1956 by one of Evola's closest disciples, P. Rauti [see *above*, ft. 2], and, beginning with the very name (*Ordine* means 'Order', in the sense discussed above), Evola's teachings are central to its political culture and strategy. It is the first postwar Evola, the one who still believed in the possibility of rallying all the forces of the Right with the purpose of taking over the Italian State. The filiation is emphatically proclaimed by O N's leadership: 'all our doctrinal and existential stands derive [from Evola]; [...] O N's work from 1953 to the present has been an attempt to transpose J. Evola's teachings to the political level [...] *Gli Uomini e le Rovine* can be considered the political gospel of national-revolutionary youth' [Graziani, 27, 30]. The pamphlet containing this declaration, a defensive memoir produced by O N's leadership for the 1973 trial which ended with the group's dissolution, is really a sort of breviary of Evola's doctrine. Concepts like those of tradition, aristocracy, hierarchy, élite rule, differentiated man, political soldier, heroic, warrior's asceticism, and the like, are generously lavished in a text where the use of understatement is rigorously banned, and words like democracy, equalitarianism, people's will, and the like, are systematically employed as terms of abuse. Further proof of Evola's influence comes from the materials related to training courses and ideological sessions for militants: the reading lists, the title of the sessions, etc., are all monopolized by Evola's doctrines [Ferraresi (c), fn. 49]. The latter, for his part, graciously bestows his *imprimatur*: 'the only group that has held fast in its doctrine, without stooping to compromise, is the one which took the name *Ordine Nuovo*' [Cinabro, 212].

Finally, the strategy pursued by O N and other Radical Right groups in this period fits very well within Evola's notions: 'reinforcement' of the State (i.e., seizure by *coup d'état*), carried out by a *Sammlung* of the 'true right', to include M S I, the 'healthy' corps of the State, like special police and paratroopers, veteran groups, youth organizations as shock troops, and the like. This, of course, does not imply that Evola was involved in *coup d'état* plots or machinations, not even that he was informed of those being hatched; it means rather that, in this period, the overall aims and strategic conceptions of Radical Right groups correspond to Evola's conceptions of the early 1950s. The 'action repertoire' of the right, for

example, does not yet mention items like systematic armed combat, attack against the State (the enemy so far is the 'regime', not the State as such), and similar modes of struggle.

This overall option corresponds to the so-called 'strategy of tension', and covers the years from the mid-sixties (opening to the left) to the mid-seventies. Especially between 1970 and 1974, several failed or aborted *coup d'état* attempts are on record, in which O N and A N militants invariably play prominent roles [for details, Ferraresi (c)]. Chronologically, this corresponds to the second part of my second period.

A third, short phase covers the middle seventies (approximately 1975-77), spurred by a remarkable turn-about in public policy towards political violence: State prosecution, which for a long time had been directed only against the left, now begins to attack also the right. This is largely the effect of a changed political climate (itself at the origin of strong conservative reactions), culminating in the 1975 electoral gains of the Communist Party. The expression of this new climate is a series of trials which produce more noise than damage (except perhaps the dissolution of the two 'historic' groups), but are nevertheless perceived as carrying an ominous message for the right: the time of impunity, of a privileged relationship with state organs is over. A new strategy appears necessary.

In 1975 the remnants of the two groups merge secretly, and decide to strike back; the slogans now are: 'attack on the State'; 'disarticulate power by striking at the transmission belts of State power'. The language is new for the right. Its similarity with that of leftist terrorism is not fortuitous, because this is the period when the Red Brigades are 'stepping up' their strategy, for the first time committing a premeditated political assassination (1976); the victim is a magistrate (62). The Red Brigade's example is important for the right, both as a demonstration of what targets can be struck by armed combat, and as a competitive stimulus. The result is the '1976 campaign', whose main episodes are: the murder, carried out by O N's 'military commander', of the public prosecutor at

(62) Originally (1971-1973/74), the strategy of the Red Brigades had been 'armed propaganda'. Starting from the notion that no political power can be obtained without military power, the idea was to use 'partisan action' in order to educate the revolutionary left to armed resistance. In this first phase, R B action was concentrated in the factory/workplace; targets were chosen for their actual or symbolic importance within it; violence was directed preferably against objects (arson); persons were threatened, and, beginning in 1972, kidnapped, but no blood was spilled until 1974. Beginning with 1974 the R B decided to spread their action outside the factory, in order to immediately reach political levels, in a

national perspective. The means became straightforward terrorist ones, the slogan: 'strike at the State in its weakest links, disarticulate its power centres, liberate imprisoned comrades, bring reprisals against the judiciary'. In 1974, for the first time, a judge was kidnapped (Sossi), and defensive combat actions were engaged. This was also the year of the first (apparently accidental) R B killings, in Padua. (But after the Fascist massacre in Brescia—May 1974—the R B declare: 'revolutionary forces are by now legitimized to answer Fascist barbarity with proletarian justice'). Yet no premeditated assassination took place until 1976—and the victim was another magistrate, Coco, in Genoa [Caselli-Della Porta].

the 1973 O N trial; a robbery in a weapons collection; a robbery in the treasury of a Ministry. The meaning of these actions is clear and declared: armed combat against the State; self-financement; self-arming. The Radical Right is on a new path.

The 1976 strategy, however, has a short life. Unusually efficient prosecution leads to the swift apprehension of the prosecutor's murderer and his accomplices; the O N-A N joint underground group is disbanded; many of the leadership are either arrested or become fugitives abroad. The stage is set for the last, fourth phase (1978-1982 ca.).

Two elements must be kept in mind for a correct understanding of this last period. The first is the impact of the '1977 movement', the tail end of the long wave of collective mobilization which, beginning with 1968, has shaken Italy [Pasquino]. The '1977 movement' implies a radical escalation of claims and means of struggle compared to the 1968 precedent. Traditional political opposition and even class differentiation are declared obsolete as the sources of a conflict which now opposes the 'ins' and the 'outs' of the system, the unemployed, the marginals, the 'Metropolitan Indians', the 'workers' autonomy'. A vulgarized notion of the Marxian 'theory of needs' further helps to blur the distinction between the public and the private sphere, between political claims and subjective wants, between legal and illegal actions: *illegalità diffusa* (widespread illegality) is the slogan which underpins an incredibly high level of social (mostly urban) conflict (from whose protagonists left-wing terrorism draws many of its militants).

This climate has a critical impact also on the Radical Right, combined with the second element mentioned, i.e., the coming to the scene of the new generations of militants. The latter, those born after 1950, are distant from the historical memory of Fascism, and perceive themselves as much more in tune with the issues, the modes of struggle, and the styles of rebellion of their generational peers, even those belonging to adverse political sides. A pitiless critique of the recent past ensues, involving not only the 'traitor' M S I but also the 'historic groups' whose *coup d'état* strategy is scorned as subaltern to the existing system ('golpismo di stato'; 'col potere non si coabita') while the ambiguous relationships of some leaders with the state apparatus are vehemently denounced. A vertical fall of their charisma ensues (63), involving the groups, whose hierarchical structure is accused of having manipulated the grass-roots militants.

A similar indictment is levelled *against ideology*, any form of ideology, perceived as a mechanism producing mystification and deceit. In place of ideology, *action* is emphatically declared to be the privileged instrument

(63) Not all the leaders of the old generation lose their prestige; some, like F. Freda, maintain a high degree of intellectual charisma; others, like P. Signorelli one-time 'political commander' of O N, keep in close touch with the younger militants, and

inspire many 'actions'; less visibly, many former cadres of *Avanguardia Nazionale* occupy leadership positions in the newer formations, to the point that some of the latter have been considered as nothing but offshoots of A N [Ferraresi (c)].

of political struggle. (*Costruiamo l'azione* is the journal of one of the most militant groups, responsible for a score of severe bombings in 1979). Action is to be an end in itself (i.e., non-instrumental) but may not degenerate into purely esthetic *beau geste*; hence it must be rooted in higher values. Amidst the ruin of all old ones, the only value surviving today is *combat as an existential duty*: 'nothing better than the just battle befits the Kṣatriya'. Against any notion of profit, utility, equalitarianism, combat shall be ruled by dignity, courage, and, above all, honour and heroism. Such are the values of the 'political soldier', the 'new legionary' (all symbols linked with Codreanu's Legion are eagerly taken up by the Radical Right in this period (64), possibly because the mystique of death that is so prominent in the Legion's iconography and *Weltanschauung* [Jesi 1979 (b), 30 ff.] is quite appropriate for this last, desperate, nihilist phase of the groups). Only legionary spirit may lead to the kind of de-personalization and total existential commitment that bring the militant to fight 'as a humble soldier, in a war without time and space, side by side with the Spartan and the Templar, the Samurai and the Kṣatriya, against the dark forces of subversion'. The outcome is 'exemplary', 'heroic action', dictated not by political/utilitarian, but by existential motivations:

we are not interested in seizing power, not even, necessarily, in establishing a new order [...] what interests us is combat, action in itself, the daily struggle to assert our own nature (65).

Referral to Evola is frequent ('Evola is a beacon'): this time it is the late, anarco-nihilist Evola of *apoliteia*, whose teaching has gone through a process of radical simplification and vulgarization. What for Evola was a long, painstaking, and by no means linear itinerary, which only the very few might hope to cover successfully, is here reduced to its most literally brutal aspects: each man is a law unto itself; the search for one's own nature is rapidly brought to conclusion by identifying with the warrior; combat, then, is the obvious parth. It is not by chance that in this period two of the most 'warlike' Evolian tracts (of 1935 and 1940) [*Metafisica della Guerra; Dottrina ariana*] are reprinted and widely circulated (66).

(64) For example, *Terza Posizione*, one of the most militant groups, whose adherents were decimated by arrests following the massacre in Bologna, reproduces in its organization the terminology of the Iron Guard: the basic units are called '*cuiburi*' (plural of *cuib*, nest, the Iron Guards cells); the upper-level, secret, highly selective unit, 'the aristocracy of the aristocracy' is called 'Legion'; etc. *Quex*, the journal of '*spontaneismo*' [see below] borrows from the same lexical quarry: 'In order to give birth to a CUIB, three or four comrades are sufficient' [Ferraresi (c), 84, 93; capitals original]. Many other examples could be presented.

(65) This should be contrasted with the

opposite kind of statements, coming from left-wing terrorists. For example, a 1973 document of the *Red Brigades*, quoted in *Potere Operaio* (1974), criticizes 'militarist or anyhow wrong tendencies'. A militarist deviation is that of believing that armed action, envisioned as an 'exemplary fact', is capable of 'setting the masses in movement'. 'Gruppista' is the deviation of those who attribute to Samurai-like nuclei the function and tasks of armed combat [Tranfaglia, 542].

(66) An impressive documentation of how these teachings are received can be found in *Quex* (from *Hitlerjugend Quex*, a Nazi youth hero, the 'coordinating bulletin' of

The strategic outcome is *spontaneismo armato*, the formation of small, swiftly acting and disappearing groups, linked in a loose pattern and hence reciprocally autonomous, although operating all in the same 'bacteriological culture', where, for example, militants frequently overlap, and actions may be 'signed' by more than one organization. They are the protagonists of the last season of struggle, especially in and around Rome.

right-wing 'political prisoners', of which five issues were published, following F. Freda's directions, between Oct. 1978 and March 1981. Mostly written by the Gotha of black terrorism (the outstanding figure is M. Tuti, sentenced to life for the assassination of some policemen), *Quex*' importance lies in its being the theoretical mouth-piece of *spontaneismo armato*, insofar as such a thing may be said to exist, given the area's general reluctance, not to say hostility, towards theory and systematic reflection.

One of *Quex*' recurring themes is the praise of 'heroic', 'exemplary' action, that is, action without a precise instrumental purpose. This is a classical *topos* of the warrior's ethic, which *Quex* expounds on the basis of Evola's doctrine, especially in the condensed version presented in the two tracts just mentioned. There Evola starts by noting that the contrast between action and contemplation, typical of Western society, was unknown to the ancient Aryans, for whom also action could be a means of spiritual fulfillment. Among types of action, war, of course, takes first place, since it corresponds to an eternal struggle among metaphysical forces: on the one hand, the Olympian principle of light, the solar and uranic reality; on the other, brute violence, the titanian-terrestrial element in all its barbaric, feminine, demonic essence. Thus Evola. Diligently the disciples echo him: 'Being legionary for us means being soldiers of luminous forces against all what is telurism and chaos. Hence, for a legionary, the struggle is not a purely material action, but is essentially spiritual'.

In ancient tradition, war and the way to the Divine are inextricably linked. This is true of the Nordic-Germanic world, where Walhalla is the seat of an immortality basically reserved for heroes fallen on the battlefield: no sacrifice pleases Odin-Wotan more than that offered by him who falls in combat [*Dottrina*, 12, 17; *Guerra*, §4]. To which *Quex*: 'the legionary achieves complete fulfillment in Heroic Death [...] the thought

of Death is always in his heart, so that he is ready at any moment to set out serenely on the triumphal journey to Walhalla [...] the Kingdom of the Heroes'. Principles like these are at the core of the Islamic tradition, in the notion of the 'dual War' the 'small', material one, waged against the enemy or the infidel ('small holy war'), and the 'great holy war', belonging to the inner, spiritual order, that is, the struggle of the supra-human element of man against all that is instinctive, passionate, subject to natural forces. The 'small' war is the path through which man should achieve the 'great' war, in perfect simultaneousness; hence 'holy war' and 'God's path' (*Jihad*) are often used as synonyms [*Dottrina*, 46]. This, again, is literally repeated in *Quex*: 'the essence of Legionary action must lie in the dual concept of small/great holy war [...] It will be necessary to establish what kind of action is simultaneously functional for the small and the great holy war'. [It may be noted incidentally that in most of these groups, pro-Islamic attitudes go together with radical anti-Semitism]. Finally, the Indo-Aryan tradition of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, where the God Krishna condemns as cowardice the humanitarian scruples which prevent the warrior Arijuna from going into battle: the duty to fight derives from a divine judgment, which takes no account of earthly needs; similarly, the heroic deed must be desired for its own sake, beyond any contingent motivation, any passion, any vulgar utility. 'When the warrior is able to fight with absolute purity [...] he breaks out of his human chains and evokes the divine as a metaphysical force [...] [*Dottrina*, 25]. From the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, via Evola, to *Quex*: 'the worth of an action is in the action itself, and in the interior purity of him who performs it; its overall strategic usefulness is irrelevant'.

The human passions that the warrior must ignore include also hatred: 'the necessity to fight, even to exterminate another people may be accepted, but this need not be associated to hatred, rage, scorn [...]

At first some relatively structured organizations operate, with names like *Movimento Rivoluzionario Popolare* (armed branch of the journal *Costruiamo l'Azione*), *Terza Posizione*, some of the most extremist components of F U A N (*Fronte Universitario di Azione Nazionale*, the M S I youth organization). Around 1980, however, many of their leading figures are arrested, and the groups are practically dismantled (*Terza Posizione* as a consequence of the Bologna massacre). The last *desperados* left on the scene (whose actions are usually signed as N A R, *Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari*) in a short time carry out a volume of violence that is impressive both for the amount and the motivations. The wild fury of action that is not politically instrumental ('we are not interested in seizing power, nor in educating the masses') in the last months of these splinter groups' activities seems dominated by two main passions: the first is *revenge* ('our ethic teaches us to kill enemies and annihilate traitors. Will to struggle sustains our daily combat, thirst for revenge nourishes us'). The second, overlapping the first, is *purification*: 'we are not afraid to die, nor to finish our life in jail; our only fear is not to be able to clean everything up', that is, eliminate disloyal comrades, traitors, and informers. In the course of savage internecine struggles, at least half a dozen top militants are killed by their own, while others are captured or fall in combat. Discourse is not only interrupted, but closed. At least for the time being, this is the end of *spontaneismo*.

7.2. The 'Nuova Destra'

Discussion of the so-called *Nuova Destra* and its senior sibling, the French *Nouvelle Droite*, will be even more summary than the previous one, partly because more literature is available on the subject [Revelli, Taguieff, Douglas].

The *Nuova Destra* as something between a political group and a cultural movement was officially initiated in 1977, by members of M S I's youth organization (*Fronte della Gioventù*) close to P. Rauti's component within the party (*Linea Futura*). Its adherents had previously belonged

The true warrior fights without recurring to such base motivations' [Rovine, 145]. The theme is taken up by F. Freda, possibly the chief theoretician and 'ideological entrepreneur' of extremist groups (he runs the most important publishing house for Radical Right materials—the *Edizioni di Ar*), besides being chief defendant in countless massacre trials. 'Cold and sharp fanaticism', claims Freda, should inspire the 'political soldier' while 'wild hatred' befits the people at large. The political soldier 'must harbour neither hatred nor love [...]. Enemies must be eliminated for purely hygienic reasons

[...]'. To which, again, *Quex*: 'the Legionary is above any laws of this degenerated civilization [...]. His own law is that of Honour, Loyalty, *Purifying Action*. The Legionary's action is both destructive and creative [...] destructive of everything which is represented by this shopkeepers' society; creative because it leads to the *purification* of everything that has been generated by it [...]'. A copy of a document containing the same concepts, and drafted by the same people, was left in a telephone booth in Bologna a few days after the August 1980 massacre [Ferraresi (c), 95].

(besides to M S I) to several right-wing groups or formations, including some of those mentioned in the last paragraph. For them, as for their more militant colleagues, Evola's doctrine was the major point of reference and identification (67). In a politico-cultural context which denied legitimate citizenship to neo-fascism and refused to acknowledge right-wing intellectuals and their products, Evola's thought had been the 'essential mortar' which held together generation upon generation of (especially young) militants by providing a sophisticated *Weltanschauung* which could claim for itself, with apparent plausibility, full-fledged cultural status, moreover offering a shield against the stones and arrows (and possibly the lures) of the inimical modern world. Shields, however, are only defensive weapons: and indeed for those who had not chosen the 'path of the warrior', the alternative was to lock themselves up beyond the walls of traditionalism, and wait, impassibly, for the end of the world. Impassably, but also motionlessly.

However, the world outside is in motion, and around the end of the seventies some impatience is being felt towards 'those "Jesuits" of the revolution, who claim to possess the Truth, and meanwhile have been sitting there, for the past thirty years, cursing the world and doing nothing' [Solinas, 33]. The expectation of Kali-Yuga, of the end of the cycle, it is now felt, can be an alibi for inaction, or an 'incapacitating myth' making action impossible, at a moment in which the overall political and cultural situation seems to offer new possibilities to a Right which may want to 'descend upon the world'.

From their viewpoint, significant changes are occurring first of all in the political sector, characterized by the suffocating immobility which has overcome the system, after the disappointing conclusion of the 'national unity' experiments (governmental coalitions *almost* including the Communist Party, that is, leaving out only the neo-fascists). With this goes the staleness of, and generalized impatience with, old-fashioned 'anti-fascist' rhetoric. Possibly more important, at the cultural level a deep sense of crisis seems to be undermining, in Italy as well as elsewhere in the West, the equalitarian paradigm and its components—the notion of progress; the classical idea of reason [Gargani]; Marxian theories and class politics, etc.—carrying with it, as a non-marginal side effect, the 'rehabilitation', on the part of leftist intellectuals, of thinkers hitherto

(67) 'Devotional' statements and homages to Evola are countless in the writings of the *Nuova Destra*. For example, M. Tarchi, possibly the group's leading intellectual and organizing figure, has edited and introduced the articles published under Evola's direction in *Regime Fascista* [see above, p. 107], with the title: *Diorama Filosofico* (Rome, Edizioni Europa, 1973). The same title (*Diorama Letterario*) is borne by

the *Nuova Destra's* most regular publication, a monthly book review journal existing since 1979. Tarchi is also the curator of the *fac-simile* re-edition of the ten issues of *La Torre*, a 1930 journal animated by Evola (*La Torre. Foglio di espressioni varie e di tradizione una*, edited and introduced by M. Tarchi (Milano, Il Falco, 1977)). Other examples could be easily adduced.

unquestionably assigned to the right, first and foremost Nietzsche and C. Schmitt.

All this is perceived as the breach which may offer to a Right shrewd enough to seize the opportunity a chance for re-entering the system. The strategy requires first of all a rejection of 'politicking politics' ('politica politicante') in favour of 'metapolitics' (but also of *grosse Politik*, in German so as to make the reference to Nietzsche and Spengler clear). This means disassociation from M S I, taking distances from it, or at the very least playing down the homogeneities with a party depicted as the representative of traditional politics ('the old Right'). The focus is instead on purely cultural endeavours, the prime task being the establishment of a rigorous *Weltanschauung* capable of meeting the challenge of contemporary society. In document after document (68), the elements of such *Weltanschauung* are ceaselessly put forward. They include: the choice of organic communal bonds against capitalist society and its mechanical, quantitative, depersonalized, abstract, over-intellectualized relationships; the rejection of the market and of utilitarian attitudes in the name of a superior 'spiritual' view of life; a strong acceptance of the 'myth of the roots', leading to an organicist conception of the world founded on a rank order among identities that *differ* because of their origins, development, and functions: at the core of it all, a strong rejection of the equalitarian myth, and a passionate advocacy of the notion that

[...] differences among individuals are beneficent, [as proven by the] research carried out in recent years by scientists like A. Jensen, W. Shoskley, H. J. Eysenck, R.J. Herrnstein. The acknowledgement of differences, diversities, inequalities among men calls for the rejection of projects aimed at making mankind uniform around one single value, one single model. It means holding distances from totalitarianism, of whose brutally repressive effects the 'enlightened' utopia of a society of equals is nothing but the theoretical premise [Tarchi, 118].

Now, most of these ideas can be found in Evola's writings, or, for that matter, in those of any self-respecting radical conservative. For the current strategic purposes of the *Nuova Destra*, however, Evola's doctrines might not be entirely appropriate. His uncompromising advocacy of élite rule, aristocracy, hierarchy, Order, etc., may embarrass those who pretend to hold a purely *horizontal* notion of difference, so as to earn for themselves a place within the present trends in favor of 'difference' and

(68) From the middle seventies onward a score of journals express *Nuova Destra* positions. Among them: *Dimensione ambiente* (ecology and 'bio-politics', closely related to many 'ecological' groups within M S I's *Fronte della Gioventù*); *Eowyn* (periodical of 'feminine alternatives': the values of 'femininity' against feminism); *Machina* (media, communication, theatre, etc.); *Dimensione cosmica* (science fiction and astronomy); *La voce della fogna* (youth problems);

etc. Most of these periodicals have a short, irregular existence; the most enduring one, besides the already mentioned *Diorama Letterario*, is *Elementi*, the Italian version of *Elements*, the mouthpiece of the French *Nouvelle Droite* [see below]. *Nuova Destra* publishers are, among others, *Il labirinto* and LEDE (*Libreria Editrice Europa*). Finally, the founding 'manifestos' of the *Nuova Destra*'s are to be read in Accame *et al.*, and Apú Mani (a) and (b) [Revelli].

pluralism; who, because of their neo-romantic indictment of industrial evils, claim to possess up-to-date ecological credentials, together with *bona-fide* anti-capitalist ones, due to their forefathers' pre-Marxian critique of capitalism; who, because of their exploitation of the interwar crisis thinkers, are entitled to comfortable chairs at the great round table where 'crisis' is endlessly debated [Acquaviva *et al.*]. And certainly, Evola's non-equivocal advocacy of a rigorous stand on the right can be an embarrassment for those who, with the help of left-wing 'discoverers' of Nietzsche and Co., clamour for the obsolescence of the left/right dichotomy (69); whose whole project, indeed, aims to prove the irrelevance and staleness of such a dichotomy [G. Accame *et al.*; on the right/left dichotomy, Galeotti]. And, altogether, Evola's lofty and disdainful 'interruption of discourse' with the modern world cannot be of much use in day-to-day cultural skirmishes with the representatives of such a world.

Those who want to 'jump into the breach' need more agile and up-to-date intellectual ammunition. Yet, reference to Evola is never abandoned, possibly for sentimental reasons, possibly to avoid too strong a break with the past, and, more important, because of the use that can be made of his doctrines in the *strategy of euphemization* which is at the core of the New Rights' cultural project. Indeed, Evola's carefully nurtured ambiguities towards Fascism and Nazism are utilized in the attempt to prove that one can hold traditional values and still be critical of the two regimes (the time not being ripe yet for their full rehabilitation in democratic circles). Moreover, Evola is the great connecting link with the *conservative Revolution*, whose authors (Jünger, Spengler, Schmitt, von Salomon, etc.) enjoy great popularity as part of the ongoing German revival, while the whole is promoted as a respectable (i.e., non-Nazi, and, why not, anti-Nazi: think of July 1944!) conservative movement. Thus, Evola's books still enjoy a proud place on the shelves of the *Nuova Destra*, but they are not opened as often as in the past, while a score of other texts join them and gain prominence, some of which are the classical anti-democratic and reactionary thinkers of all times, while others are newer, and have reached the Italian branch via the intermediation of the more experienced French *Nouvelle Droite*.

The latter is older (its nucleus, G R E C E [*Groupement de recherche et d'études sur la civilisation européenne*] was incorporated in 1969, but its promoters had been active earlier under different names and labels),

(69) The philosopher Massimo Cacciari, one of the main representatives of the 'Nietzsche revival' in Italy, member of the Communist Party (one time even communist M P) stated in an interview: 'The *Nuova Destra* thinks, operates, produces in the perspective of overcoming the traditional terms of the right-left distinction'. After praising their effort to 'reject the conventional political geography', he went on to

announce a public meeting with *Nuova Destra* representatives, adding: 'this is a confrontation which is as necessary as air is necessary for breathing. The oxygen of the old bunker is not enough any more; it's vitiated, and moreover scanty'. A couple of lines above he had acquitted them of 'any relationship with the past, and adherence to totalitarianism' (in *Panorama*, Nov. 29, 1982; quoted in Revelli, 206).

more established, and successful. Its relevance for the *Nuova Destra*, more than in any specific theoretical contributions, where points of divergence remain (e.g., nominalism *vs.* traditionalism), consists in the methodological and strategic example it has set. And given the longer time it has been operating, the weighty corpus it has produced through an impressive array of media (70), and the conscious way in which the strategy has been put to work, its elements are more visible and easier to identify [Taguieff].

Quite apart from merely negative connotations in terms of *entrisme* and *noyautage* (infiltration), the overall purpose of the *Nouvelle Droite* has been to gain access to the field of legitimate, high-brow cultural and political debate, from which, in France as well as in Italy, the Radical Right had been excluded since the fall of Fascism. To a large extent the operation has been successful. The *Nouvelle Droite's* spokesmen write regularly in prestigious media with broad audiences (e.g., *Figaro Dimanche*), while well-known European intellectuals grace the initiatives and the editorial boards of its journals with their names (e.g., Julien Freund, Hans J. Eysenk, Konrad Lorenz, Mircea Eliade, Arthur Koestler, *et al.*). Altogether, it can be said that discussion of the *Nouvelle Droite's* ideas and themes by now takes place with limited awareness, on the part of democratic interlocutors, that a threatening political actor is being brought back to the scene; in other words, the *Nouvelle Droite* in France has become a normal political event [Taguieff (a), 55].

In order to reach this result, a cultural strategy has been adopted based on the criterion of axiological adaptation: an argument must be adapted to the audience it intends to persuade, as only by respecting the latter's values and presuppositions can it hope to be effective [Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca, 31 ff.]. Several rhetorical techniques are employed to implement this principle, some of the most visible being the following:

euphemization: the most distasteful and threatening *topoi* of the Radical Right's *Weltanschauung* are systematically played down in the published materials, and less connotated expressions take their place; a set of implied references is then charged with making the meaning clear to initiates. For example, words like 'race' and 'racism' are eschewed in favour of the more respectable 'culture', 'ethnic group', 'people', etc.; reference to an intellectual genealogy founded on the names of Gobineau, Wagner, Chamberlain, etc., clarifies the real meaning of such terms [Taguieff (a), 132; (b), 36]. (Confidential materials, as will be presently shown, demonstrate no such compunctions, and talk freely about, for example, 'community of blood and culture').

(70) The panorama of journals, weeklies, periodicals, etc., controlled or influenced by members of G R E C E and other *Nouvelle Droite* organizations (themselves linked via interlocking directorates), is much too complicated to be reproduced here [see the tables in Taguieff (a), 114-117]. The most

important periodicals are: *Nouvelle École* (founded 1968) and *Éléments* (founded 1973), followed by *Études et recherches* (founded 1974; new series 1983). The *Éditions Copernic* are the main publisher of the *Nouvelle Droite*.

scientism: in a cultural context which privileges science as the highest form of knowledge, one of the stated goals of the *Nouvelle Droite* is 'the propagation of scientific developments which will dissipate the prejudices and "taboos" of the reigning ideology' [Douglas, 365], namely equalitarianism and democracy. The 'hard new' sciences like anthropology, biology, genetics, ethology, sociobiology, psychology, psychiatry, etc., are thus systematically plundered, and those results are selected that support the notions of heredity, invariance, innateness, the biological determination of social and ethical attitudes, and so on: 'la vraie politique c'est la biopolitique'. The outcome is a set of savage rules, which are then put forward by right-wing ideologues as 'laws of nature' (71).

appropriation and distortion of the opponents' ideas: this takes place first of all at the lexical level, where, for example, the *Nouvelle Droite* defines itself as a 'cultural revolution', as 'surrealism in the service of the revolution': the sense of the operation is to integrate 'the others' ritualized words, [so that] their polemical usage on the latter's part becomes impossible' [Taguieff (a), 71]. A similar role is played by the *Nouvelle Droite*'s self-connotation as 'new', in a culture where a high positive value is placed on the notions of 'newness' and 'novelty'. Then the opponents' arguments are used against them: the true totalitarianism is liberalism (72). Finally, claim is laid on the opponents' methodology: the *Nouvelle Droite* defines

(71) Samples [in Revelli, 114-117]: *inequality* is the first law of all social structures, be they human or otherwise; life is nothing but increasing differentiation (equated with inequality) among beings; *aggressiveness* is one of the basic instincts of all living species; its curbing spells degeneration and ultimately death [Benoist (b), 192]. From here, a sort of *eu-poleomological* view of life is derived: conflict is not a last resort, due to historically determined contrasting interests in specific social formations; rather, it is a primary human impulse. A harsh social code follows, aimed against all attempts to mitigate the 'unfair ferocity' of nature through an ethic of helpfulness and assistance to the needy: 'the interests of the species are not in accord with humanitarian exigencies' (Lorenz). Welfarism, the 'mortal tepidity' of the modern world, is scourged as a veritable attempt to undermine the genetic health of the species. As against that, a number of 'healthy mechanisms' are upheld: *hierarchy*, as the only mechanism capable of neutralizing in-group aggressiveness; *elitism*, since equalitarianism goes against the grain of social and intellectual progress [however contradictory such a notion may be for those who despise pro-

gress]; *group identification* via opposition to the outsider, as the elementary condition for group survival—and so on.

(72) This is a classical *topos* of reactionary thought, according to which the 'modern' taste for general laws and decrees is a danger to ancient liberties. From the German romantics to twentieth-century reactionaries (f.e. Maurras: 'le libéralisme supprime [...] en fait toutes les libertés. Libéralisme égale despotisme' [quot. in Stenrhell (a), 355]) the theme comes all the way to the New Right (compare Tarchi's statement quoted *above*, p. 142, with Benoist's notion that liberalism, being totalitarian, is inhuman [Benoist (b), 109]). The twist of the argument is also standard: 'The art of the traditionalist thinker consists in taking a problem from the armoury of the adversary and connecting it by a logical argument with the solution which is supplied by his own attitude to life. The discrepancy between the expected "enlightened" answer which is constantly present in the reader's subconsciousness and the answer which he in fact receives produces a state of anxious tension' [P.R. Rohden on J. de Maistre, quoted in Mannheim (a), 141].

itself as 'Gramscism of the Right' (73). Borrowing from Gramsci's articulation of the relationships between 'civil society' and 'political society', a strategy is advocated where the seizure of cultural power takes precedence over that of political power. There is no need here to discuss the real significance of these notions within Gramsci's system [Bobbio (b)], nor to point out the ways in which they are thus distorted [Revelli, 164]. The significant aspect is the use, however questionable, on the part of the *Nouvelle Droite* of Gramsci's categories, instead of those coming from presumably more congenial authors, like Maurras' distinction between 'pays légal' and 'pays réel' [Revelli, 135]. The reason for the choice (apart from a presumable taste to 'épater le bourgeois') is a strategic one: by laying hands on a prestigious left-wing intellectual, the *Nouvelle Droite* stakes its claim to a significant portion of symbolic capital, whose importance lays in the 'investiture effect' it bears [Bourdieu, 124]. This, in other words, is an act of self-consecration and self-sanction, through which the *Nouvelle Droite* claims for itself a place in a legitimate universe of discourse including the most prestigious representatives of the left; doctrinal and strategical differences obviously remain, but coexistence in the same space legitimates them [Taguieff (a), 72].

In a cultural strategy thus conceived, differences with Evola's positions are visible: recourse to Gramsci's authority, pretense to scientific validation of statements and, most of all, the quest for admission to the modern universe of discourse are the most obvious examples, to say nothing of the *querelle* between nominalism and traditionalism [Sheehan]. But the portion of ideal patrimony held in common with the Italian thinker is possibly weightier, and explains the fact that Evola, without being considered the supreme pontiff, is frequently quoted and maintains a prominent place in the *Nouvelle Droite*'s Pantheon (74), together with a score of others. The common heritage includes, first of all, a number of intellectual ascendants ranging from de Maistre to Nietzsche, and especially to the authors of the *konservative Revolution*, whose prominence in the *Nouvelle Droite*'s iconography grows with the growing of A. Mohler's influence on A. de Benoist [Taguieff (a), 123]. The principal enemies are also common, including the Americanism-Bolshevism and Judaism-Christianism binomials, plus liberalism, democracy, and equalitarianism. Common as well is the ideal political system (an organic state, élite rule, aristocratism, Order, etc.), based on hard-core anti-equalitarianism (75). And differences might

(73) See, for example, *Pour un 'Gramscisme de droite', Actes du XVI^e colloque national du GRECE* (Paris, Le Labyrinthe, 1982).

(74) Evola is given a prominent place among the 'figures' (= family portraits) presented by A. de Benoist in his first major theoretical text [Benoist (a), 432-436] (the first 'contre-figure', by the way, is that of A. Gramsci: *ibid.*, 456-460]). After

Evola's death, the *Éditions Copernic* opened their series "Maîtres à penser" with a collective work on Evola: *Julius Evola, le visionnaire foudroyé* (1977). Three of the chapters ('Les hommes au milieu des ruines', pp. 133-164; 'L'œuvre de Julius Evola' and 'Sur Julius Evola', pp. 235-247) are signed by Robert de Herte, alias Alain de Benoist.

(75) 'I define here as *belonging to the*

not be so great, after all. For example, recourse to science is deceiving, because only those results of research are selected which lead to a conception of nature as a reality outside of any historical dimension, in the sense made clear in the previous discussion [Marcuse, 5-6; see above, fn. 21]. This then allows the *Nouvelle Droite* to plunge head-on (stepping over inconsistency and contradiction) into the deep sea of the irrational (i.e., non-scientific), for example, by embracing tradition as the permanent heritage of blood and soil. Tradition is permanently ever-present because it is beyond time [Sheehan, 65], hence it defies history, and can be reached only by non-rational means, such as myth. The circle is thus closed: 'la *vie* vaut toujours mieux que l'*idée* qu'on s'en fait; [...] il y a prééminence de l'*âme* sur l'*esprit*, du *caractère* sur l'*intelligence*, de la *sensibilité* sur l'*intellect*, de l'*image* sur le *concept*, du *mythe* sur la *doctrine*' [Benoist (b), 34; italics in the original].

In other words, the most extreme identifying *topoi* of the everlasting reactionary right are systematically and without one single exception received by the 'new' right: tradition against progress, hierarchy against equality, rule from above against democracy, the primacy of aristocracy over subaltern classes (both in terms of power and values), ultimately *mythos* against *logos*. Not surprisingly, de Benoist's overall objectives, couched in Nietzschean terms, ring a very familiar bell for the reader of *Cavalcare la Tigre*: 'the "positive nihilism" of Nietzsche has no other sense than this: one can build only in space which has been previously razed to the ground...' [Benoist (b), 76]. The suspicion is legitimate that the *Nouvelle Droite*'s modernizing patina be only a veneer, to be used for purely instrumental reasons. A confirmation comes from the frank statements of one of the leaders, M. Marmin, contained in a 1975 internal (and confidential) bulletin of G R E C E: 'the positions that G R E C E may take under given circumstances are relative, and, if need be, can undergo revision. Their role is a tactical, that is, a secondary one compared to what really concerns us and forms the object of our struggle: namely, on the one hand, the awareness of a common heritage, of belonging to a community of blood and culture; and on the other hand, the wish to

right, by pure *convention*, the attitude which considers as good the *diversities* of this world, and, as a consequence, the *relative* inequalities that are their necessary result; conversely, it considers evil the gradual homogenization of the world, promoted and implemented by the by-millennial preaching of equalitarian ideology [...] This of course does not mean that each and all forms of inequality be necessarily right. [Perish the thought] [...] It means to believe that diversity is the *fait-du-monde par excellence*; that such diversity necessarily produces de facto *relative* inequalities

[can an inequality be anything but relative?]; that society must take such inequalities into account, and admit that people's worth differs [...]; that in the course of social relationships such worth is essentially measured by the responsibilities that each one acquires [...] that freedom consists in the actual possibility to exercise such responsibilities; that adequate rights must correspond to the responsibilities, the end result being a hierarchy, based on the principle *unicuique suum*' [Benoist (b), 58-59].

secure for our community a future corresponding to its original nature' [Marmín, quoted in Taguieff (a), 18].

Evola's interruption of discourse had, at least, the merit of frankness *.

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